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General publications

6-9

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION  
IN DEVELOPMENT  
IN THE CITY OF TORONTO  

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Maureen Quigley, the author of the report, graduated from the University of Toronto in Urban Sociology in 1971. She was commissioned by the Department of Municipal Affairs to undertake this study as a summer student.

John Pearson, project director  
ONTARIO DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS



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## PREFACE

This is an exercise in the decision-making process. It is focused on the segments of the interstitial area abutting Toronto's downtown where redevelopment proposals and programs have become the source of controversy extending beyond the limits of the various projects.

Social change, as a consequence of physical alterations of neighbourhoods, happens constantly in such areas where the urban centre is subject to the dynamics of metropolitan growth. The nature and ramifications of this kind of social change arouses public interest as local concerns are expressed through the actions and reactions of residents and landowners articulated through leaders of a variety of origins. A complex of private interests and government agencies emerge, the subject matter for scholars and a forum for politicians.

The basic assumption that warrants this study is related to the growing number of community and special interest organizations seeking to play a more significant part in the procedures leading to changes in residential areas.

In keeping with an awareness at the federal level, this trend was anticipated by the Department of Municipal Affairs in a statement entitled "The Three R's of Citizen Participation", issued in January 1969. This report serves as a further indication that citizen participation is a manifold process that may require more explicit recognition in public policy and modifications of municipal services.

J.P.  
Oct. 14, 1971.

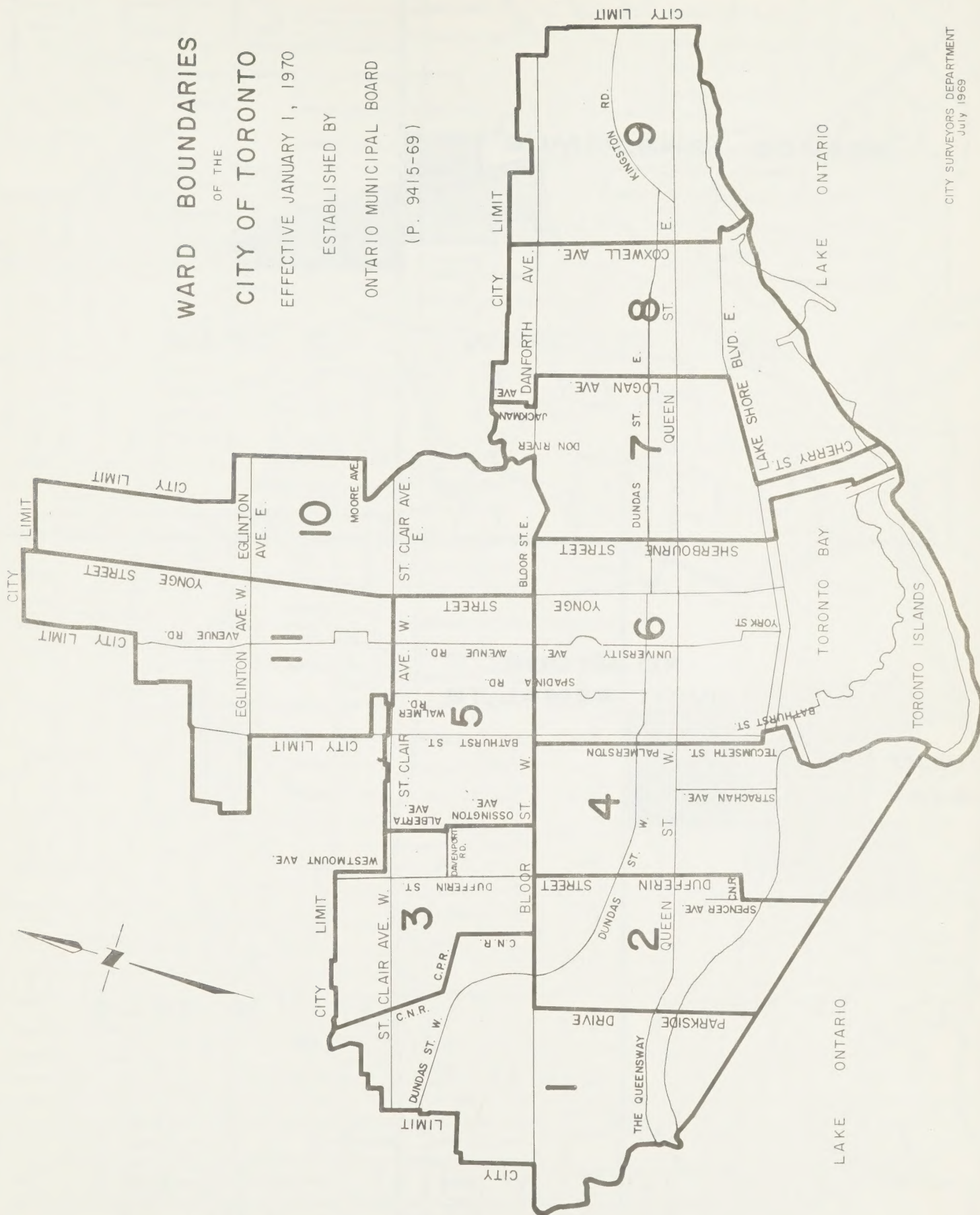






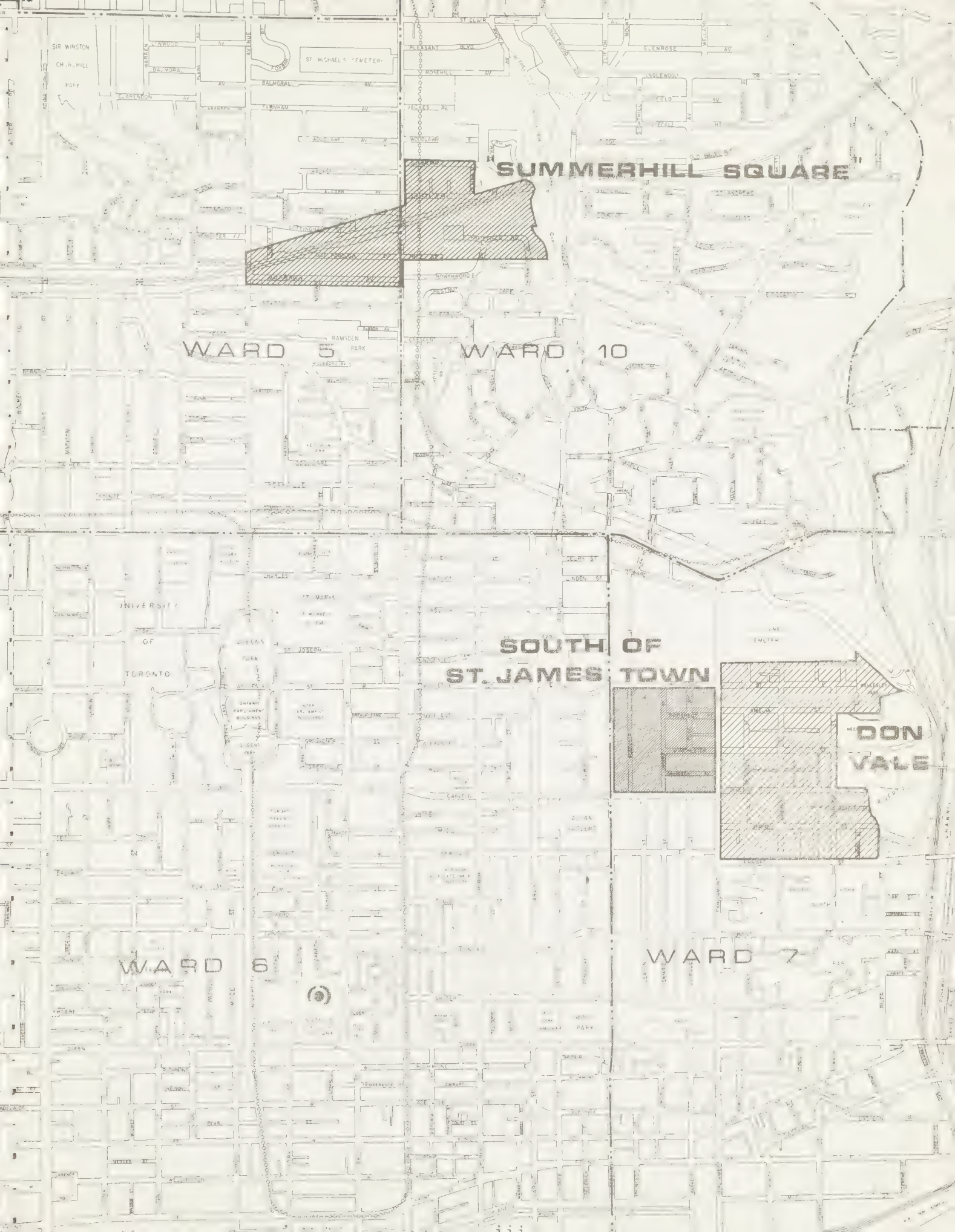
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CITY SURVEYORS DEPARTMENT  
July 1969









SUMMERHILL SQUARE

WARD 5

WARD 10

SOUTH OF  
ST. JAMES TOWN

DON  
VALE

WARD 6

WARD 7





## INTRODUCTION

"There's no greater expert than the people. They know what they want and have to fight for it."

- Roberta Sankey, Community Worker  
and Resident of South of St.  
James Town.

September 12, 1971.

What people want and how they fight for it is the concern of this report. Traditionally under our system of representative democracy, politicians have viewed their election to office as a vote of confidence by the electorate giving them authority to represent the interests of the community as they see fit. In recent years, there has been a growing concern and demand by many community and interest groups, for active participation in the decision-making and policy formulation of local government which affects both their lives and the development of their neighbourhoods.

These changing trends elicited the interest of my supervisor, Mr. John Pearson, who believed that the Department of Municipal Affairs ought to become more familiar with the "issues" and the nature of citizen participation in local government.

Accordingly, the assignment which I was given as a summer research project was generally to examine the nature of citizen group communication with elected and appointed officials in the City of Toronto. The specific area of



inquiry and method of study were left to my discretion with the hope that as a recent university graduate in Sociology with no experience in practical research, I would devise a study scheme and present a version of citizen participation devoid of sophisticated research techniques but rather based on first hand observation and analysis of various citizen groups, elected and appointed officials in the City of Toronto. In this way, my work is an experiment.

It is important to realize that as of May 25, 1971 when I began working I was extremely unaware of the process of local government in the City of Toronto. Any knowledge was strictly a result of newspaper reports and even that was limited. In other words, I started from scratch, knowing nothing about urban politics but what I had read in textbooks, but very eager to learn. The challenge of a limited time period of roughly four months working alone and being given a free reign in devising the study and conducting it as I wished, provided an incentive to learn and produce an account of my findings which has resulted in the most frustrating, and at the same time, rewarding experience which I have ever had.

Upon examination of the many different types of citizen group activity ranging from the establishment of community day care centres to city-wide opposition to the Spadina Expressway, it was decided that in the short time allotted it was essential to focus on one specific area in which citizen groups have become extremely vocal in recent





years namely in the physical development process. In every urban area, physical development necessitating change in the physical complexion of the community or neighbourhood has proceeded at a rapid rate commensurate with the influx of rural and immigrant population. The extent and shape of the development, the agency which carries it out, and the impact which it will have on the existing community are all factors which are undergoing intense scrutiny by citizens groups and government officials in every project.

It is true that citizen groups have tried to influence local government decisions on certain issues for many years. In this sense citizen participation is not a new phenomenon. However, it will be argued in this report that the nature of citizen participation in "development" in recent years is new. Perhaps it will suffice to say here that the participation of various groups as recorded in the following chapters represents not only an ad hoc response by residents to a perceived threat but also important philosophical questions which underly that response. Questions regarding the rights of property ownership, tenancy, public vs. private interest and the meaning of "community" are fundamental to an understanding of citizen participation in development. They have arisen from a growing awareness and understanding among groups throughout the city of the political process and its implications for individual neighbourhoods and the city as a whole.

The format of the following chapters is three



"case studies" in the loosest sense of the term. They describe three different instances of development in the City of Toronto where neighbourhood groups have attempted to influence the decision-making process of elected and appointed city officials.

The first case is the Urban Renewal Scheme in Don Vale. This was chosen as an instance of citizen participation in public development for renewal purposes in order to understand first the interaction between various citizens groups in one community on the issue of Urban Renewal and second, the interaction between the citizens and the elected and appointed city officials in devising the renewal scheme. Don Vale represents the first attempt at institutionalizing citizen involvement in formulating a renewal scheme in the City of Toronto.

The second case is the "Summerhill Square" development project by Marathon Realty Limited, a private development corporation, which is a subsidiary of the Canadian Pacific Railway. "Summerhill Square" was chosen as an example of middle and upper income citizen groups' participation in devising a private development project.

Finally, the case of South of St. James Town was examined in order to ascertain the nature of lower income and welfare tenant activity in opposition to Meridian Building Group Ltd. South of St. James Town is an example of a private development which is perceived by the residents of the area as a tool of community destruction.





These three cases were chosen to gain a comprehensive picture of development in Toronto, i.e. private and public development as an incentive to action by groups of different socio-economic levels in three distinct geographical areas of the city.

The procedure used in obtaining research material was largely informal interviews with representatives of the citizen groups in the areas concerned, with elected and appointed city officials and private developers. In addition to this, I attended numerous meetings of the City of Toronto Planning Board, Committees of City Council and Council as a whole, as well as citizen group meetings throughout the city in order to obtain an understanding of the political process on city-wide issues to complement the specific cases considered here.

The reader will notice that the format of presentation is not uniform throughout. This may be a drawback in terms of structured sophisticated academic research techniques and for this my apologies to the academic reader. However, this was unavoidable since three entirely different situations at different time periods are examined. The only visible thread throughout is citizen participation in the development process and the general ideological and philosophical conclusions which will flow from three isolated cases.

With deference to traditional research



techniques which are usually embodied in a report of this nature, I hope that the reader will view this summer research project as a unique and refreshing approach to an issue which must be understood and solved by citizens, politicians and appointed officials at every level of government.







Donvale





DON VALE

The Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme prepared by the City of Toronto Planning Board in 1969 is now history and a dead issue. Numerous academics, government and social agencies have documented in great detail the history of urban renewal in Don Vale both in terms of the specific detail of proposed plans and the agency of the Working Committee through which the final scheme was prepared.<sup>1</sup> To describe again the specific demands of Don Vale residents which were embodied in the Urban Renewal Scheme would be redundant. Rather it is the intention of this section of my report to examine the problems of citizen participation in the development of the renewal scheme as described to me in interviews with a representative of each citizen's group in Don Vale. An analysis of the rationale underlying the formation of three distinct citizens groups raises serious questions as to the nature of citizen participation especially in a working-class area. Prior to the analysis, a brief history of the process of citizen participation will be given.

1. City of Toronto Planning Board, Don District Appraisal, 1963.  
City of Toronto Planning Board, Urban Renewal Scheme for the Sackville Dermott Place Project, 1966.  
City of Toronto Planning Board, Don Vale Urban Renewal, 1969.  
Lorimer, James. Working People, James Lewis & Samuel Ltd., Toronto, 1971.  
Richards, K.J. Citizen Participation: Does it Really Work?  
A review of the Toronto experience in the Don Vale Urban Renewal Area from 1966 to 1968. Urban Renewal Section, Department of Municipal Affairs.  
Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto, The Don District Study, 1970.



The renewal scheme was not implemented in 1969 largely because of a moratorium placed on financing for renewal by the federal government. However, its merit lies in the fact that a working committee was established containing members of the City Planning Board, Development Department and other relevant city departments, the Ward 2 (now Ward 7) aldermen, members of the Board of Control and two members and one alternate from each community group. On March 6, 1968 the Working Committee was officially recognized by City Council as the agency which would prepare a renewal scheme reflecting the wishes of Don Vale residents in the area bounded by Parliament Street, Gerrard Street, the St. James Cemetery and the Riverdale Zoo in the north east quarter of the Don Planning District. This can be attributed firstly to the 1968 policy of the provincial government stating that no financial assistance would be forthcoming for urban renewal unless a program involving citizen participation were evolved and secondly to the strong opposition of the Ward 2 Residents' Association established in 1966 to the initial scheme as devised by the Planning Board in 1965.

The Ward 2 Residents' Association and the Ward 2 Businessmen's Association were the two local groups represented on the Working Committee with city officials when the committee began to hold public meetings to gain a consensus on the terms of reference for the preparation of the renewal scheme. At the same time, a group of resident property owners within the Residents Association began to question the need for renewal advocating an end to public renewal and a new policy of rezoning to permit high density private





development anticipating that they would receive a higher price if expropriated by a developer rather than by the city for renewal purposes.

In order to fulfill the terms of reference of the Working Committee - specifically that "any scheme preparation and implementation should proceed with the fullest property in Don Vale" <sup>2</sup> -- two members of the Property Owners' Association sat on the Committee for a short period of time and then resigned stating that the Working Committee did not represent the interests of property owners in the community. They refused to subscribe to the terms of reference for the Working Committee which had been approved in principle by the City Council on November 20, 1968. Through a series of briefs to the Development Department and Board of Control the Property Owners' Association established its own terms of reference to Council for consideration. The Property Owners' Association with over one hundred members and in no way connected with the Residents' Association claimed that it was the only legitimate association reflecting community interests and demanded direct access to city's appointed officials rather than working through the Working Committee which it refused to recognize. The intense conflict between the Working Committee and the Property Owners was

2. City of Toronto, Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme, 1969 Appendix 1. Item 3.



sufficient to undermine the credibility of both organizations in the minds of city officials and politicians. In order to resolve the problem, the City's Commissioner of Development proposed to deal independently with the Property Owners through "exchanges of information and opinion not the provision of staff services or materials which can only be accorded to an officially constituted committee of Council."<sup>3</sup>

The Working Committee continued to solicit the views of area residents through block meetings and by December 1968, the first draft of the scheme was prepared requesting that the character of the area be preserved and maintained through enforcement of housing standards and a public works improvement program. Implementation of the housing standards was to be achieved through government grants and loans for property rehabilitation.

The Property Owners' Association concurred with the physical aspects of the scheme as prepared by the Working Committee having changed their policy from favouring high rise development to preservation of the low density character of the area. However, they demanded that grants for rehabilitation be geared to the needs of resident-property owners in order that houses which had been allowed to deteriorate during the uncertainty of renewal could be raised to the standards of By-Law 73-68 at no expense to the owners. Otherwise, they feared that the inability of

3. Report by Mr. D. G. Emslie to Toronto City Council, February 3, 1969.



resident owners to finance rehabilitation would force them to sell to middle class professionals who could afford rehabilitation costs. It is difficult to ascertain the motives for the change in demands of the Property Owners' Association from high density residential development to stabilized low density. It is possible that although the Property Owners' did not work within the Working Committee, they perceived that the scheme as devised by the committee did not reflect the traditional "bulldozing" approach of urban renewal. Perhaps the "political activists" on the Working Committee convinced even the members of the Property Owners' Association that the renewal scheme could be controlled by residents thereby reducing fears of expropriation by the city among members of the Property Owners' Association. However, in spite of concurrence on the physical aspects of the plan, the Property Owners continued to oppose implementation of the scheme as prepared by the Working Committee because they objected to the way in which the plan had been prepared and especially to the membership of the Working Committee.

During the final stages of discussion of the Working Committee scheme prior to the conditional approval of the scheme by Council on September 10, 1969, the Don Vale Tenants' Association was established to fight the absence of suitable protection for the tenant in the Working Committee scheme. It was the belief of this association, which had been formed after the fact, that a program of rehabilitation by property owners would cause an increase in rents which would prohibit low





income tenant occupancy. Because of the failure of the Tenants' Association to state their case earlier in deliberations they received little consideration from City officials.

Failure of the City to receive federal approval for the Working Committee's scheme by December 31, 1969 resulted in the removal of the urban renewal designation in Don Vale since the moratorium on financial support for rehabilitation made scheme implementation impossible.

The establishment of the Working Committee and the history of citizen participation in devising the Don Vale Urban Renewal Scheme was a turning point in citizen communication with City Hall. In appearance, the traditional philosophy of "planners know what is best for an area and its residents" was laid aside and replaced with a sincere attempt on the part of city officials and politicians to listen to what the people had to say. However, the fact that three citizens organizations refused to work together through a single working committee would suggest that consensus of citizens was not achieved, and possibly that all interests were not considered. An examination of the factors undermining the process of participation of conflicting interest groups on the Working Committee will hopefully focus on problems which must be dealt with both by the citizens and officials if citizen participation in urban renewal is to be any more than token accommodation of frustrated residents by equally frustrated city officials.



In order to ascertain philosophical differences which undermined interaction of citizens and city officials and politicians on the Working Committee, interviews were conducted with a representative of each of the residents' associations in July, 1971. Rather than presenting each interview in its entirety the views of each representative have been isolated regarding the balance of representation between the property owner and the tenant, leadership and participation on a Working Committee, and the effectiveness of a Working Committee as an agency of citizen participation in planning.

Tenants and Property Owners:

Mr. Peter Akehurst, a property owner of the Don Vale Association of Homeowners and Residents (Ward 2 Residents' Association) who was active on the Working Committee, stated that the Tenants' Association was not a potent force partially because it developed after the fact and involved only a few people. He said that tenants' interests were not well represented by the Renewal Scheme largely because the "homeowner feels especially in urban renewal that the tenants have no rights and tenants sense this. At the most tenants have constituted 20% of the executive of the Association of Homeowners and Residents. The homeowner feels that the tenant is a transient who wanders in for a few months and then leaves. In this area, tenants and welfare are synonymous".

Mr. Akehurst emphasized that "only if a tenant is stable in an area rather than being part of a 'developers army'



can he achieve any sense of community with property owners. If they are stable and active in a community they will be given a voice. Otherwise it is impossible".

Mr. George Loumbardas, of the Don Vale Property Owners Association stated that citizen participation in an area such as Don Vale can be granted only to property owners. "The majority of tenants are welfare recipients who never remain in the area for more than two years. The only people who have a right to participate in planning for a community are the resident property owners because their property ownership gives them a vested interest which they must be allowed to protect."

Mr. Norman Browne of the Don Vale Tenants Association was the most vociferous interviewee in describing the relationship of the tenant and property owner in Don Vale. He was the spokesman for the organization when the rights of tenants were demanded in the Renewal Scheme. It was only after briefs were presented to committees of Council and the Tenants Association was recognized that he began to solicit membership. He stated that it was understandable that Council and City officials did not give much consideration to the association per se due to late timing and lack of membership. However, the plight of the tenant as he describes it must be understood by elected and appointed officials and also property owners.

Mr. Browne stated that tenants comprise 56% of the residents in Don Vale. Therefore, an organization to fight



for tenants' rights was essential. In his opinion, "The major problem of organization was apathy. There are very few rooms or apartments in Don Vale which are on a long term lease and consequently there is no security in residence. Therefore, the only type of tenant attracted is the single, welfare or lower class transient who changes residence constantly. Given that tenants have virtually no vested interest in the property or home which they occupy, interest in its future is generally non-existent."

Further, Mr. Browne stated that, "there is an overwhelming feeling that the tenant cannot be protected. The absentee landlord is primarily interested in monetary return at the least possible cost in terms of maintenance and repairs. In most cases, if repairs are required the burden of cost is shifted to the tenant who is in a precarious position because of a rent ceiling and must often move".

"The level of political awareness among tenants in Don Vale is extremely low because of lack of education, inarticulateness, poverty but primarily the absence of any vested interest in property." Mr. Browne stated that "a feeling of political and social awareness could only be created if the tenant had something which he owned, which he could defend, protect, maintain and have pride in. If the tenant had some means such as co-operatives or a long term lease to achieve a sense of identity, his level of awareness would increase and he would have a tangible as well as ideological base on which to defend himself and his surroundings."





Once this level of awareness is created, "a property equivalent or bill of rights should be instituted to give the tenant an equal voice with ratepayers in deciding the future of his area. In the eyes of politicians, bureaucrats and property owners in this area, the level of credibility of the tenant is low. This functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy in the eyes of the tenant himself."

Leadership: Indigenous or Professional

The Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto has described the leadership on the Don Vale Working Committee as involving a "community regarding" or "public regarding" political ethos. This ethos according to James Q. Wilson "is most likely to be found among citizens who rank high in income, education or both, is based on an enlarged view of the community and a sense of obligation toward it."<sup>4</sup> These characteristics were evident in the members of the Residents Association who sat on the Working Committee and it was this "professional leadership" of recent arrivals to Don Vale which marred effective co-operation of the Homeowners and Residents Association and the Property Owners Association on the Working Committee.

Mr. Peter Akehurst, whose views as a member of the Ward 2 Residents Association were well represented on the Working Committee was strongly in favour of the middle

4. Wilson, James Q. "Planning and Politics : Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal", Speigel, Hans : Citizen Participation in Urban Development, Vol. 1 Washington, D.C., National Institute p.50.



class professional leadership of Karl Jaffary, a lawyer, and Alan Samuel, a professor. Although both men had been residents of Don Vale for at least a year, Mr. Akehurst emphasized that they were indigenous middle class leaders in a largely working class area and for this reason they resembled "outside rather than indigenous leadership". In the interview, Mr. Akehurst stated that outside leadership is crucial to effective working class community organization at least at the outset. "When I found that my house was to be expropriated, I had no idea what to do. The working man has a terrible resignation to authority. He must be shown how to fight. He needs help to get information. He can't afford days off to go to City Hall. Indigenous working class leadership is most effective because it strengthens the credibility of the organization at City Hall but it is almost impossible because research knowledge and facilities are difficult to obtain." Mr. Akehurst stated that the middle class leadership of the Residents Association was crucial in organizing and articulating the demands of residents for a working committee and participation in the development of a renewal scheme.

In his opinion, the limitation of this leadership in terms of Working Committee effectiveness was that "the Property Owners felt that at the Working Committee meetings they were out-talked and out-maneuvered. It is very



difficult for the ordinary man on the street to make his view known as well as Karl Jaffary or Alan Samuel. The Property Owners felt they couldn't compete on the same terms but they knew they had enough strength to approach the city so they worked outside the Working Committee".

Mr. George Loumbardas of the Property Owners Association stated that when the middle class professional residents, who had been in Don Vale only a short period of time, offered their services to the Residents Association, it became an arena of political manipulation rather than citizen participation. He characterized these leaders as "political radicals who used the issue of renewal in Don Vale as a means of gaining public attention for political agrandizement or in the case of one leader, a chance to obtain material to write a book. Because the residents of Don Vale lacked an understanding of the renewal situation or an ability to organize, these 'radicals' were able to manipulate them both at block meetings and on the Working Committee".

The Property Owners Association could not recognize the Working Committee members as representative of the citizens of Don Vale because they were a "political clique" who had nothing in common with the working class property owners. Mr. Loumbardas believed "that at the outset, the City officials and politicians did not question the sincerity of the leaders but then they began to see the





representatives on the Working Committee as a clique putting their ideas on paper." He maintained that City officials agreed to recognize the Property Owners and work with them outside the official Working Committee "because of the questionable credibility and sincerity of the resident Working Committee members."

If we accept the theory that a working class community is unable to organize itself to articulate interest on any issue without outside or indigenous professional help at the outset, the activities of the middle class professionals in the Residents Association and on the Working Committee can be viewed as the key to success of initiating citizen participation in Don Vale. However, when one reviews the history of the Property Owners Association, this theory at least in Don Vale becomes suspect. The fact that this organization of working class property owners questioned the credibility of middle class professional leadership and actively sought to destroy it would suggest that indigenous independent working class activity is not only possible but highly successful, provided that the public know how to avail themselves of the privileges of deputations, briefs and access to appropriate city officials.

It is possible however that the reason that the Property Owners Association formed in reaction to the Working Committee was that the "membership" of the Working Committee as seen by the Property Owners



Association was an issue which could be fought. It is possible that without the activity of the "activist" members of the Working Committee, the Property Owners might never have existed.

Further it is difficult to draw comparisons between the leadership of the Working Committee and the leadership of the Property Owners Association since the objectives of the two groups were not the same. The Property Owners Association was formed to oppose the perceived threat of political activists monopolizing the Working Committee. The Working Committee was formed to devise a future plan for the area. The motivation for each group was different in that the former was combative and the latter was non-combative.

But the fact that the Property Owners Association was able to organize from within rather than requiring outside help regardless of their motives is significant. Perhaps if the middle class leaders in Don Vale had not set themselves up as spokesmen for the community but rather maintained a background position, educating residents on the political process and their rights, but letting the indigenous working class residents speak for themselves not only at block meetings but at the Working Committee, the split between the Residents Association and the Property Owners might not have occurred or at least it could have been resolved through the Working Committee.



The Working Committee as a Forum of Citizen Participation:

An important consideration to bear in mind when reflecting on citizen participation in urban renewal in Don Vale is that the Working Committee was officially recognized by City Council thereby facilitating institutionalized citizen participation in planning. In itself this conscious attempt on the part of elected and appointed city officials to involve citizens in formulating decisions which would affect them was a tremendous achievement in light of past performance of City Hall. The establishment of the Working Committee represented a growing conviction on the part of many government officials that "citizens could, at least in some degree, be masters of their own neighbourhood."<sup>5</sup> The plight of the tenant and problems of leadership have been examined insofar as they undermined the effectiveness of citizen participation. However, even if these problems had not existed there were problems in the structure and powers of the Working Committee which made the Committee a forum of only token participation.

Mr. Akehurst stated that the moment the City started to deal with the Property Owners outside the Working Committee, it negated the value and legitimacy of the committee. "Since the Working Committee was officially recognized, all opinions should have been stated and dealt with at the

5. Social Planning Council of Metropolitan Toronto,  
The Don District Study, 1970 p.117.





committee, not outside it. If the City can divide an area, they can stop the recognized committee from achieving its aims. The existence of competing organizations in any one area undermines the credibility of the Working Committee. The only way a Working Committee can be representative of the total community is if it is given the power to operate. If it has no power, people become frustrated, lose interest and begin to work outside it, thereby undermining its credibility."

"The Working Committee had no power. We could talk as much as we wanted to, but there was no money available from the federal or provincial government to implement the decisions of the Committee. We were undermined by every level of government. The City approved the scheme in principle on September 10, 1969, provided it met federal approval by December 31, knowing that this was impossible. Prior to this, once the scheme reached City Hall, it was tossed from committee to committee with no one willing to make a decision."

Mr. Akehurst felt that the only way a Working Committee can be effective is if officials from every level of government have the financial and legislative power delegated to them as members of the Committee which allow them to make binding decisions at the committee level rather than developing a scheme without any financial base and having it rejected after completion because of lack of financing.

It could be argued in light of the facts of the Don



Vale Urban Renewal Scheme, that the institution of a Working Committee was a politically wise but meaningless gesture on the part of elected and appointed city officials in order to elicit citizen support. This proposition questioning the sincerity of elected and appointed city officials regarding the use of a Working Committee in formulating a renewal scheme is highlighted by a speech given by Mayor William Dennison to the Canadian Association of Renewal Officials in 1970. Regarding community involvement in urban renewal planning the Mayor made the following comments:

This is a subject which is little understood and has been the topic of much unthinking comment. We have had the concept of participatory democracy pronounced as a federal command yet no one has defined satisfactorily what is intended by this well-rounded phrase. The expressions "citizen participation" and "community involvement" have also received the attention of public speakers and the public but no one has defined what they mean.... It is well known that much of the criticism directed at our present process (of government) is justified. Governments by their nature fail to respond adequately or to communicate fully with the people they represent. Modern society dictates that government become more responsive but at the same time remain responsible. The question arises however, whether this responsiveness can be achieved by the recognition of non-elected groups as being representative of a particular point of view and whether such groups have the right to demand power without responsibility. Many politicians take the position that this is the way to make democracy more responsive. I feel that this is not the correct way and that the continuing erosion of the authority and responsibility of the elected politicians can lead to balkanization of our society. We in the city have encouraged the creation of working committees comprising local representatives and city staff to arrive at solutions to the problems of neighbourhoods.



In effect what has been created are groups which claim to speak for a neighbourhood and which demand for themselves the authority which can only be vested in a municipal council. Instead of participation we have arrived at the position of confrontation. The expectations of such groups have been created by the pronouncements I have referred to but I think the illustration of what has happened in Toronto should be sufficient to cause a pause in such comments until a positive and structured look has been taken at what we are attempting to do to the democratic process and whether the present direction of change is the one which this society wishes to follow.

The skepticism of the Mayor regarding the use of working committees was concurred in by many other members of Council at that time. Although these comments by the Mayor do not reflect official council policy they would seem to indicate that at least in his opinion working committees were little more than necessary evils imposed from on high. Although the use of a working committee was extremely time consuming and costly, it was not allowed to threaten the power of City Hall or really change "token" participation because city officials and politicians knew that financing for any scheme proposed by the Working Committee would not be forthcoming from senior levels of government within the time allotted.

If alternatively, the City acted in good faith anticipating financial support for the scheme it seems curious that the federal and provincial governments would make renewal financing contingent upon citizen participation in their policy statements and then refuse to fulfill their part of the bargain when these requirements





had been fulfilled through an officially recognized Working Committee.

CONCLUSION:

It would seem that the absence of financial support was the crucial factor which undermined the success of the Don Vale Working Committee in implementing the Renewal Scheme. If financial support had been guaranteed to the Working Committee when it was formed contingent on active involvement of the residents of Don Vale in devising the scheme, the Working Committee would have had a financial basis which would have made it sufficiently powerful that all conflicting interests in the community would have been forced to resolve their differences at the Committee, not outside it. Financial support combined with power and responsibility delegated to government representatives on the Working Committee to make binding decisions would have made the committee an effective organization incorporating all interests in the community. If this had been the case, the physical plan of the scheme might have been different but at least it would have been adopted and citizen participation would have been realized.





summerHILL square





SUMMERHILL SQUARE

The following account of citizen participation in the planning of a private development, Summerhill Square is not intended to follow the same format of presentation or discussion as used in the previous case study. It is important to keep in mind that each of the three case study areas was examined in isolation of the others in anticipation of uncovering three different processes emerging to shed some light in the varying forms of citizen participation in the development process.

In 1966, Marathon Realty Company Ltd., a subsidiary of CPR decided that the 18-acre site on either side of the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks between Price Street and Shaftesbury Avenue, immediately east of Yonge Street was "particularly attractive to urban residential development". It was on the Yonge Street subway, the north boundary of South Rosedale and also the Vale of Avoca, a quiet ravine. The site was occupied by obsolete railway and industrial buildings in poor condition and since it was CPR property, redevelopment to improve the character of that site in itself and as a complement to surrounding residential areas seemed feasible and favourable to Marathon and the City Planning Board. Accordingly, plans for the \$30,000,000 development were designed by approximately 20 consultants hired by Marathon at a cost of approximately \$175,000. Simultaneously, the planning staff commenced a study of



the possibilities of rezoning this piece of land for residential instead of industrial use in light of the Official Plan Part II statements for the surrounding escarpment and Rosedale areas.

The specific details of Marathon's development proposal are not essential to the present discussion largely because they are too technical and numerous to be dealt with in the space allotted, and are readily available in both the City of Toronto Planning Board Report (Ref.911) and from Marathon Realty Ltd. In essence, the development proposal involved the demolition of the existing industrial uses to be replaced by luxury apartment and townhouse accommodations for approximately 3,000 residents who would be middle and upper income single people or retired couples. A minimal number of family units were to be included. Also to be contained in Summerhill Square were retail and office facilities and a cinema which would complete the anticipated "community within a community". A tunnel was to be constructed to enclose the railway tracks on the site and a ramp constructed over Yonge Street westerly to Marlborough Avenue to give easy access to the site from the already heavily travelled Yonge Street.

To gain an appreciation of the manner in which the proposed development generated citizen group activity it is important to keep in mind that the site was occupied by industrial and railway use; therefore,





residential dislocation was not a factor in evaluating the merits of the development. However, in spite of the absence of a direct threat, there was considerable concern among residents in the area surrounding the development site as to the effects which a residential development accommodating 3,000 new people would have on their quiet residential communities of single family dwellings. Three citizens groups were extremely active in negotiating with both Marathon Realty Ltd. and the relevant city departments to ensure that Summerhill Square was not only a well-planned development but also that it did not have a harmful effect on the existing residential communities. The activities of each of the groups will be examined as described by representatives of each group in interviews and briefs submitted to the City Planning Board. It will be argued that it was the socio-economic background of residents in permanent well-established ratepayer organizations in the Summerhill Square area which facilitated a rapport with elected and appointed City officials and the developer enabling them to achieve their goals with a remarkable degree of success.

The South Rosedale Ratepayers Association is the oldest ratepayers organization in Toronto, established in 1914 to service the rather wealthy old residential area between Yonge Street and the Don Valley Expressway, the CPR tracks at Summerhill and Bloor Street. Its membership is approximately 500 homeowners and it requires an annual fee which has risen over the years to \$10.00. The association



has been extremely active on a continuing basis in dealing with community problems and has achieved respect and recognition from elected and appointed City officials. According to Mr. Gordon Waldie, President of the association at the time of "Summerhill Square" proposals, communications with both Marathon and City Hall regarding the development were perhaps more time-consuming and complicated than those regarding other issues, but due to its experience in defending community interest the association followed a course of action in which it had gained expertise over many years.

The South Rosedale Ratepayers became aware of the possibilities of a development on the CPR land in the Spring of 1970, roughly three years after development proposals had been initiated. Mr. Waldie, the President, contacted CPR to enquire and was directed to Marathon. A meeting was arranged between Marathon and the South Rosedale executive, on June 18, 1970, to see the plans, with Marathon instructing South Rosedale Ratepayers not to tell anyone since the development had not yet been made public. According to Mr. Waldie, on June 23, 1970 there was a leak to the press forcing Marathon to hold a press conference to make their plans public and to submit to the City Committee on Buildings and Development an application for rezoning, presumably at an earlier date than originally intended. The preferential treatment of the South Rosedale Ratepayers by Marathon prior to making the development public would seem to suggest that



Marathon deemed it politically advantageous, to gain the support of this strong long-established ratepayers organization earlier than other residents groups. But this gesture did not occur until three years after planning began.

The major concern of the South Rosedale Ratepayers was the increased flow of traffic which would be generated by 3,000 new residents in Summerhill Square. An access road had been planned to the development from Pricefield Road in South Rosedale to service only the proposed townhouses. However, South Rosedale Ratepayers believed that this would be a heavily travelled road by all residents in the development and thus the increase in traffic would disrupt the quiet residential area of South Rosedale.

Secondly, there was a concern that lack of sufficient parking facilities within the development would result in visitor and possibly some resident parking in South Rosedale. Thirdly, the existing zoning density in South Rosedale was 0.6 but development proposals by Marathon indicated that the density in the easterly portion of the development would be more than twice that permitted in the remainder of South Rosedale.

These three areas of concern were acted on by South Rosedale Ratepayers in two ways. First the association continued correspondence with Marathon to ensure that their concerns regarding traffic and parking would be dealt with. Secondly, the association submitted a brief to the City





Planning Board on its request on October 2, 1970, outlining their specific concerns and requesting public meetings to be held by the Planning Board with residents of the areas affected.

In summary, the first stages of citizen participation in development by the South Rosedale Ratepayers would appear to have been most effective. Good rapport was established with both Marathon and City officials. According to Mr. Waldie this can be attributed to the fact that precise, well-researched reasonable requests were submitted to the Planning Board and Marathon by a ratepayers organization which was well-respected in both the community and the city, and which had been in existence for many years. He also stressed that the South Rosedale Ratepayers is different from many other citizen groups in that it is not politically motivated but rather purely "altruistic to preserve the character and amenities of South Rosedale".

The involvement of the residents of Marlborough Avenue in the Summerhill Square development serves as an interesting contrast to the South Rosedale Ratepayers in that there evolved an ad hoc crisis-oriented organization which achieved the same degree of success as the South Rosedale Ratepayers in a much different manner.

Marlborough Avenue running east-west lies on the western boundary of the proposed Summerhill Square development separated from it by Yonge Street, the heavily travelled



north-south artery. Traditionally, ratepayers on Marlborough Avenue had been members of the Avenue-Bay-Cottingham Ratepayers Association but in the late summer of 1970 the Marlborough Avenue Residents Association was established by Professor Jack Granatstein to meet the "crisis" situation on Marlborough Avenue. Professor Granatstein described Marlborough Avenue as an ethnic mixture of professional and working class people in 85 houses undergoing private rehabilitation. The character of the street has changed over the past five years with the influx of professionals to become strongly middle class.

The "crisis" which provided an incentive for the establishment of the Marlborough Avenue Residents Association was the relocation of the York Racquets Club from the Summerhill Square site to vacant CPR lands on the north side of Marlborough. Marathon had decided to place the Racquets Club on Marlborough to improve and stabilize the property. However, the Marlborough Avenue residents felt that the new structure was "an extremely unattractive building that blights a regenerating street". The residents felt that the Club had substantially lowered the property values of homes on the south side of the street and refused to quietly suffer financial loss and inconvenience from this side effect of the proposed development. Accordingly, the irate residents were mobilized by Professor Granatstein and five other active professional residents on Marlborough to fight Marathon's encroachment on their street. Regarding the



issue of the Racquets Club, meetings were held between the club president, the self-appointed executive of the Marlborough Avenue Residents Association and Marathon, at which Professor Granatstein confronted the club with the threat of throwing garbage on the front steps of the club if its physical appearance were not improved.

There were several other issues related to the development which had a direct impact on the Marlborough residents who were determined to fight. The ramp to provide access to Summerhill Square over Yonge Street was to end on Marlborough directly opposite homes at the east end of the street. The residents believed that this ramp would substantially increase the already heavy flow of traffic from Yonge to Avenue Road on Marlborough and would endanger the safety of the numerous children on the street. Therefore, they demanded that either the ramp be eliminated or changes be made in both its structure and in the traffic flow regulations on Marlborough in order that the residents would not suffer from the development. The residents were also concerned about the "massive ugly tunnel" covering the CPR right of way in the development proposal because of aesthetic effects, the possible "sonic boom" produced as trains left the tunnel and the hazard to children. Finally they shared concern with South Rosedale Ratepayers regarding the increased volume of traffic and parking which would be engendered not only by the residential complex



but also by retail facilities and the cinemas.

In response to a request from the Planning Board, the Marlborough Avenue Residents Association submitted a brief outlining these areas of concern and demanding public meetings between City officials, Marathon and the residents in order that these problems would be rectified. In an interview, Professor Granatstein stated that there were several reasons why the Marlborough residents received recognition from City officials and Marathon. First, they were well organized. Since the "fight" involved one particular street, the executive of the Residents Association maintained constant contact with all residents in order to inform them of developments as they occurred and solicit their opinions. Further, Professor Granatstein stated that they were also responsible for "dragging residents out to meetings when necessary. A bad turnout at the wrong time could be fatal to a movement based on such limited aims and on such a small base as that of Marlborough Street Residents Association". Six residents were extremely active in corresponding with City officials. In Mr. Granatstein's words "they did their homework". For example, traffic counts were done to be used as evidence against those obtained by the Department of Public Works and the traffic consultants hired by Marathon. Mr. Granatstein emphasized that block organization is most effective in dealing with a private developer or City officials because its "representativeness"





especially in ad hoc issues cannot be questioned and its strength in physical numbers is obvious in participation at meetings.

According to Professor Granatstein, the second reason for obtaining recognition and a voice in the development proposals was that the executive of the association was strongly middle class. They were self-appointed and endorsed by the residents. Among them were an artist, an actor, architect, journalist and professor. They knew how to write letters. Professor Granatstein acknowledges the fact that his threats would not have been taken seriously if he did not have a "title". The executives were intelligent, articulate and established sufficient credibility in the eyes of the politicians, bureaucrats and Marathon that they became "a force to be reckoned with".

Third, and in some ways the key to success was that the Marlborough Avenue Residents hired legal counsel, Jeffrey Sack of Levinson, Sack and Dunn, to defend them at the Planning Board and against Marathon. The executive requested donations from residents to cover the legal fee but Sack was willing to work for nothing.

Fourth, the Marlborough Avenue Residents used the press. They contacted each newspaper and were able to receive continuous coverage during deliberations with Marathon. Also, MacLeans magazine did an article entitled: "These Nice People Just Won A Street Fight."<sup>1</sup>

1. MacLeans, March 1971. p.31



Finally, contrary to the claim by many residents groups in the City that aldermen do not represent them adequately, the residents of Marlborough Avenue became dependent on their aldermen. In that sense, it was political organization. According to Professor Granatstein, Ying Hope, the senior Alderman of Ward 5 was on the City Planning Board until the end of 1970. As Granatstein said in his book:

He could be and was a most valuable asset to us. Although Bill Archer, the other Alderman was not ally of the ratepayers, he seemed to be able to make the distinction between good and bad development. More important he was an expert at making the wheels turn at City Hall, a friend to the bureaucrats.... Above all, Ying Hope and his support for the ratepayers made Bill Archer nervous. He could simply not afford Hope to move too far in advance of him ... Hope would support us because he believed in ratepayer organizations and because he wanted to show he was better than Archer. Archer would support us because he wanted to demonstrate that he was a more effective alderman than Hope and because he believed in "good" development. The situation was almost ideal: one moderate new guardsman and one rational old guardsman, each competing with the other to prove that he was the "real" spokesman for Ward 5 and Marlborough Avenue. 2

It would seem therefore that the Marlborough Street Residents Association or at least its executive, although they lacked the permanence and tradition of the South Rosedale Ratepayers, had sufficient understanding of the political process at City Hall and the tools available to them to defend themselves against encroachment by the

2. Granatstein, J. L. Marlborough vs. Marathon: One Street vs. The Developer A. M. Hakkert Ltd. Toronto. To be published Fall, 1971.



developer. According to Professor Granatstein, "our aims were limited. We didn't want the moon; we merely wanted to be left alone".<sup>3</sup>

The third group to participate in discussing the proposed Summerhill Square was the Summerhill Ratepayers Association. Unfortunately, an interview with the President of Summerhill Ratepayers could not be obtained to ascertain the history or specific boundaries of the association. However, let it suffice to say that the Summerhill Ratepayers were concerned about the effects of Summerhill Square on the residential area north of the proposed development site. In his brief to the City Planning Board, Mr. Fergus Oliver, President of the Summerhill Ratepayers stated that "the basic concern of the residents is the obvious increase in traffic that will result" if the L.C.B.O. located on the development site were to be relocated on Shaftesbury Avenue on the northern boundary of the development. Apparently this is the busiest "liquor store" on the continent and assuming that the clientele were not reduced by relocation, the traffic generated would flow through the Summerhill area. The Summerhill Ratepayers saw this increased traffic flow as an "unnecessary threat to our children".

The second concern of the Summerhill Ratepayers was that the tunnel to be built as an enclosure to the

3. Ibid., p.86



railway tracks would create a "wall effect" which would ruin the physical character of the area if not landscaped properly.

The Summerhill Ratepayers followed the same procedure as the South Rosedale Ratepayers in making their specific concerns known to both Marathon and the Planning Board on the assumption that these would be dealt with. In closing the brief to the Planning Board, Mr. Oliver stated that "Marathon Realty are aware of our concerns and are making every effort to assist us in resolving these problems. We are confident that your planning staff will recognize our concerns and that the results will be satisfactory to all parties."

In addition to working independently to have its particular concerns resolved, each organization entered into joint discussion initiated by Marlborough Avenue Residents in the fall of 1970 to acquaint each other with the effects on each area of the proposed Summerhill Square Project. According to Mr. Jack Granatstein this coalition with other groups was essential for purposes of impact on the Planning Board, Building and Development and Public Works Committees to ensuring that their concerns would be alleviated, not necessarily for common interest. Mr. Granatstein felt that this coalition would give the Marlborough Avenue Residents added "political clout". When Mr. Waldie of South Rosedale Ratepayers was asked





if this was the intention of his association in entering the coalition, he stated that added "political clout" was not necessary for his association. However, he agreed to meet with the other associations when asked to do so to strengthen other positions.

Following the joint meeting, a brief was submitted to the Planning Board under the heading of the A-B-C Ratepayers stating in detail the concerns of the residents in all surrounding areas. They argued that the official plan for Toronto may permit such a development provided it is not detrimental to surrounding areas and used this legal basis of protection under the official plan as the argument throughout the brief.

It is crucial to an appreciation of the success of these residents groups in working with each other, Marathon and the City to keep in mind that while they may not have had any specific common interests, neither did they have any conflicting interests. Each group was in favour of development on the CPR site as a necessary improvement to the site. The Presidents of the South Rosedale and Summerhill Ratepayers were much more favourably inclined to the nature of the development per se catering to largely upper middle income single people than was Professor Granatstein who felt that the development should have been designed for families rather than "swingers". But basically there was a general feeling that development on that site



was good in spite of the profit motivation of the developer, provided that the surrounding residential areas were unharmed by the side effects of the development.

Section 12(1)(b) the Planning Act R.S.O. 1970, states that the Planning Board shall "hold public meetings and publish information for the purpose of obtaining the participation and co-operation of the inhabitants of the planning area in determining the solution of problems or matters affecting the development of the planning area". In accordance with this legislative requirement subject to objection by residents of the surrounding areas, to the development as proposed, two public hearings were scheduled. Due to the large number of residents anticipated to participate at these meetings and lack of adequate accommodation, it was decided that the first meeting would be held at Cottingham School on December 7, 1970, for the residents on the west side of Yonge Street and the second meeting would be held at Branksome Hall for residents east of Yonge on December 14, 1970. At these meetings which were well attended, Mr. Griffith, General Manager of the Ontario Division of Marathon Realty outlined the changes made by Marathon to their proposal submitted in June at the time of an application for rezoning. These changes were made in response to the planning staff report of October 13, 1970, which reflected the concerns of residents and adjustments required if the development proposal were



to be approved. The success of the three residents groups in articulating their grievances and attaining recognition from the City and Marathon was evidenced by the fact that every concern of the residents groups was resolved in Marathon's revised scheme which incorporated substantial changes to the initial development proposal at great cost in terms of time and money to Marathon.

In an interview with Mr. Michael Griffith of Marathon to ascertain his views on the manner in which citizens were involved in preparation of the Summerhill Square plans, he stated that "we designed this development quite closely with the ratepayer groups at what I think is the right time. He acknowledged the fact that there was approximately a three year period during which plans were being formulated before the project was officially made public. But he did not feel that this was wrong. He said:

I just do not believe in going to the surrounding neighbourhoods, official ratepayers organizations, etc. before we have evolved a scheme of what we would like to do. If you invite the public to discuss with you what to do with your piece of property, if you don't nine times out of ten get a park suggested, your're fortunate. How can you suggest that this is the proper way to carry out a development? Anyone who does is playing a game. In any business you carry out what you think is right and then it is sold on its merits. Although it was reported that we were forced into public discussion, that was not the intention. We knew we had to meet ratepayer groups but we only anticipated the public meetings held by the Planning Board. If you ask for citizen participation in the early stages, you become exposed to a breakdown in sincerity. You invite people in to make comments but often disregard



them, because you still think that you know the right thing to do. You are not obliged to the landowners. This process becomes dangerous in that you develop animosity among residents associations toward the developer because of suggesting that you want their ideas but really you just want to appease them.

Mr. Griffith stated that Marathon was extremely generous in its concessions to the ratepayer organizations.

If you're living in an urban environment you learn to live in that environment. Many changes were made not because we thought they were positive changes but because the residents wanted them. But under "participatory democracy" or "people power", residents do not see these as concessions or compromise. Rather they see it as their rights. The Marlborough Avenue Residents were the most difficult to deal with because of their threat of confrontation tactics. If this is citizen participation, I don't want any part of it. Summerhill and South Rosedale exerted considerable "pressure" but they were very reasonable. In spite of the side effects, each group recognized the merits of the development as a contribution to the general character of the area. The revised scheme reflecting Planning Board Recommendations and ratepayer requests or in some cases demands is a big improvement over our original plans. We did involve the citizens and various city departments and therefore I am quite sure that it is now acceptable for rezoning and a subsequent building permit.

The communications between Marathon Realty Ltd., elected and appointed City officials and the ratepayer organizations on the issue of Summerhill Square raises some interesting questions about citizen participation in development which differ from the case of Don Vale.

Why was Marathon willing to drastically revise the proposed development scheme in face of the opposition by ratepayer organizations to the initial presentation? It is significant that Marathon received pressure not only





from these organizations but also from the Development Department and the Planning Board to deal with opposition if they were to attain rezoning approval. Is this because the City concurred strongly with the grievances of the residents groups or is it because the socio-economic background and political sophistication of the residents in the area was too important to be ignored? Would the grievances of the residents be perceived as equally legitimate by all concerned if exactly the same development had been proposed south of Bloor Street? Naturally, it is difficult to answer these questions because they raise problems of social inequality which are difficult for one to contend with. Is there a substantial difference in the recognition and accommodation given to different social classes by private enterprise and public administration in spite of the fact that in theory all citizens have access to the same channels of communication and participation in decisions affecting their neighbourhoods?

Another interesting subject for consideration regarding Summerhill Square is the obviously very different tactics used by the three organizations to influence the decision-makers.

South Rosedale and Summerhill Ratepayers were permanent organizations. Marlborough Avenue Residents although connected with the A-B-C Ratepayers was strictly an ad hoc organization to fight the issue of Summerhill Square .



Once the battle had been won the organization became latent because there wasn't any other issue threatening Marlborough Avenue. The Marlborough Avenue Residents were noisier and threatened confrontation. Was this necessary because they were not in the same bargaining position as the other associations in the eyes of City Hall and Marathon? If so, can the discrepancy in bargaining positions be attributed solely to the permanence of the three organizations or did the "membership" of the South Rosedale Ratepayers give them political clout over Marlborough Avenue regardless of permanence. Perhaps noise and threatened confrontation were the only means available to Marlborough Avenue to gain a comparable bargaining position when surrounded by what Marlborough Avenue Residents perceived as "heavy company". As a corollary to this question, one must ask how much less the chances of successfully defending themselves would have been if the Marlborough Avenue Residents had not been under the leadership of a university professor with a letterhead and had not retained Jeffrey Sack as their legal counsel.

There is a third area of questions which arises from the account of Summerhill Square. At what stage should citizens be involved in formulation of the plans and decisions which will affect them? There is justification for Mr. Griffiths claim that a developer must be allowed to present specific plans and then ask for comments if any



meaningful discussion is to ensue simply because it is private land and technical planning requires technical expertise. On the other hand, if Marathon had not waited until a rezoning application was filed three years after plans were begun to solicit all opinions rather than those of the South Rosedale Ratepayers, perhaps the considerable cost in terms of both money and delay in processing of the rezoning application would have been eliminated. It is extremely difficult to reconcile the necessity of technical planning with social planning. But perhaps Marathon could have approached the ratepayers associations earlier in the planning stages as the scheme was being designed to find out what concerns residents in the peripheral areas of the site would have if such a development were to take place. It can be argued that this approach is idealistic. However, when considered in terms of the cost to Marathon in working with the residents groups at the time they chose, it is obvious that some compromise between the necessity of precise plans and the necessity of working with residents groups must be made by the developer if the project is to be economically profitable and supported by City officials.

In spite of the questions raised and problems encountered the successful communications between Marathon, the City and the Residents Associations are significant.



Simply stated, the case of Summerhill Square points to the fact that given a high degree of organization and articulateness and willingness of all parties to co-operate, citizens groups are capable of influencing the political process and the private developer in order to achieve a development scheme which is not detrimental to the surrounding residential area.







SOUTH OF  
ST. JAMES TOWN



SOUTH OF ST. JAMES TOWN

The final area to be examined as a third process of citizen participation in development is the area south of St. James Town. The process which has occurred in South of St. James Town is perhaps the most difficult to describe and assess largely because at the time of this writing the issue is extremely contentious and unresolved. Given these limitations combined with the fact that concrete information regarding development plans was virtually unattainable, this section will be a presentation of the issue as understood by the author and the meetings regarding the future of South of St. James Town which I attended during this summer, as evidence of the type of citizen participation which has occurred.

St. James Town is a superblock of 15 apartment buildings, three of which are owned by Belmont while the remainder are owned by Meridian Building Group Limited or operated by them for Ontario Housing Corporation. Immediately south of this huge complex an area bounded by Wellesley, Carlton, Parliament and Sherbourne known as South of St. James Town. In this area are 350 houses of which two-thirds have been purchased from private owners by Meridian in order to expand their high density apartment complex into South of St. James Town. The justification for this expansion by Meridian lies in the fact that this area is designated as a high density residential area on the Official Plan for the



City of Toronto. Second, since there is no legislation at any level of government which prohibits land assembly by a developer, Meridian has had little difficulty in acquiring the land since they were willing to offer to the owners prices which were too attractive to turn down.

Third, in the report by the City of Toronto Planning Board entitled Review of the Don District Appraisal (1968), prospects for this area were discussed. In the report, it was stated that "it appears that change is inevitable and that this change must be in the direction of higher densities to recognize the role of the area in relation to other developments in the Don District. Redevelopment through a public urban renewal programme does not appear to be appropriate when the opportunity exists for private redevelopment with public guidance." <sup>1</sup> Therefore, the Planning Board recommended "that council request the Planning Board to approach developers to ensure that the guide plan will be prepared to the mutual advantage of the City and any developer in the area and that provisions be made for participation by local residents businesses and community organisations in preparation of the guide plan." <sup>2</sup>

Following the purchase of the homes in South of St. James Town, many of which were in poor, substandard condition under the City of Toronto Housing Standards By-Law, Meridian rented the homes to middlemen who became landlords

1. City of Toronto Planning Board, Review of the Don District Appraisal 1968. p.5.

2. Ibid., p.6.



responsible for collecting rent, providing furnishings and utilities and renting to tenants. Accusations were made by the Meridian Holdout Homeowners Association formed by Alderman John Sewell in the spring of 1970 that Meridian was allowing the standards of its property in the area to deteriorate to such a degree that homeowners wanted to sell and thus were in affect being forced out by Meridian.

In the summer of 1970, Alderman John Sewell who refers to himself as the "delegate" to City Council of his Ward 7 constituents charged that "Meridian is raping this area and no one is getting any benefit from that rape save for the developers."<sup>3</sup> Sewell made this accusation supported by approximately 30 members of the South of St. James Town Residents Association at a meeting of the City Executive Committee, after picketing at City Hall, imploring City Executive to defend the residents against Meridian. He stated that Meridian was employing well-known block-busting techniques. "They buy the house, fail to make any repairs, let it run down, move out the tenants, move others in temporarily and pretty soon the neighbours want to sell their homes. People are suffering because Meridian wants to build something there in the future and there is no guarantee that they will be allowed to build." Mr. William Huculak, Chairman of the Residents Association claimed that

3. Globe and Mail, July 9, 1970.





the middlemen employed by Meridian "are profiteering. They are living off the people and the City should stop it". Sewell further stated that "Meridian has the City over a barrel because it operates on the principle that nothing can be done to prevent an owner from demolishing his property if he wishes. As a result, if the City's housing standards and health regulations are fully enforced, the net affect has been that people are left without accommodation because homes have been destroyed rather than upgraded." The residents group proposed to City Executive that they enforced the housing standards but take away Meridian's option of demolition by passing legislation, or seeking it from the province to prevent any organization involved in land assembly from destroying residences until they apply for rezoning applications or until they have assembled a certain proportion of the total project perhaps 90 per cent of residences. They also recommended phasing in developments so people living in the area would be able to stay there, and more stringent control of middlemen by Meridian.

City Executive agreed to write to Meridian regarding control of the middlemen but failed to take action on the other proposals because they doubted that the Province would pass legislation to prevent demolition and they could not phase in the development since an application for rezoning had not been made. This lack of action by City



Executive confirmed in the minds of the South of St. James Town residents their suspicions that government both municipal and provincial is the puppet of the developer, giving him free reign to destroy communities and build concrete slabs as long as the City coffers are filled with the revenue that flows from assessment of high density apartment blocks. However, this meeting between the Executive and the residents association was significant in that the residents saw the City as their only defense against the private developers and hoped for intercession by the City on their behalf. They realized that their association was powerless acting independently against the developer.

Following this meeting, the City began to enforce housing standards in the area. Unfortunately, this action worked against rather than in favour of the residents as anticipated, largely because enforcement of housing standards without prohibiting demolition accomplishes nothing. In August, 1970, a meeting took place at St. Peter's Church on Bleecker Street between Meridian and the Residents Association. Philip Roth of Meridian explained to the residents that complaints by the association resulting in enforcement of housing standards meant that Meridian would have to spend more money on the houses while awaiting re-zoning. Meridian had sent notices of eviction to tenants in eleven houses on Bleecker and Ontario Streets averaging ten tenants per house. Their reasoning was that although



rezoning had not been attained and building would not begin for some time all of the houses required repairs costing Meridian from \$1,000 to \$3,000. The company would rather demolish the houses than make further repairs. However, at this meeting Roth offered to recommend to the Board of Directors of Meridian that Sewell be allowed to rent and repair the houses as long as Meridian could evict the tenants on three months notice for redevelopment.

Although Sewell saw the offer by Meridian as "motivated by a desire to see him fail and to prove that neighbourhood control is a fallacy,"<sup>4</sup> he agreed to accept Meridian's offer in mid-August after consultation with the tenants on Ontario and Bleecker Streets. Initially Sewell signed a lease with Meridian for 14 properties becoming responsible for the houses and their occupants. As of October he was responsible for 22 houses. The terms of the agreement were that Sewell was required to pay Meridian \$125 per month per house which was substantially lower rent than Meridian was receiving from the middlemen. Secondly, he was required to repair the houses to comply with the city housing standards. Thirdly, it was agreed that on 70 days notice he would give vacant possession of the houses to Meridian and take personal responsibility for relocating the tenants. The agreement was to run for one year but the lease could

4. TORONTO TELEGRAM, October 5, 1970.



be renewed or cancelled by either Meridian or Sewell at two-month intervals. It was understood that when Meridian required the houses for demolition to begin development, the tenants would be evicted by Sewell. Also written into the lease was a penalty clause by which Sewell was to pay \$100 per day for each of the houses which was not vacant on the eviction date.

Subsequent to signing of the lease, the South of St. James Town Tenants Union was established as a co-operative of the tenants in the twenty houses. All decisions affecting the houses and their tenants were to be made by the co-operative. They would decide on the rents, collect them, decide on priorities for repairs and find people both within and outside the co-operative to do repairs. It was to be a community experiment to restore the homes and the area in order that they could fight Meridian when the development plans were prepared. Sewell was aware of the risks both practical and political in becoming the landlord of approximately 30 families representing about 150 people that he saw it as a "revolutionary new concept: The Ward 7 Development Corporation". Money collected above \$125 per house would go to the Tenants Union for repairs, rehabilitation and relocation upon eviction if necessary. However, it was anticipated by Sewell in undertaking the responsibility for the houses, that perhaps the co-operative could get enough money together after rent and repairs, to plan their own





development to counter the Meridian proposal. It is extremely important to realize that the South of St. James Town Tenants Union did not see the arrangement between Sewell and Meridian as temporary although this was stated in the lease. They were determined to restore the houses to meet City standards and create such a strong community organization and spirit that they would be able to convince the City not to approve a rezoning application when submitted by Meridian.

At this point, it is necessary to try to analyze the facts as presented in the preceding pages to gain an understanding of the type of citizen participation which evolved prior to and including the agreement between Meridian and Sewell. John Sewell worked as a community organizer in the Toronto Community Union Project sponsored by the United Church (TCUP) prior to being elected as Ward 7 Alderman in 1969. He was not a "professional" organizer but rather became involved in the areas of Trefann Court in the southern end of Ward 7 and in South of St. James Town out of an interest in politics and a desire to understand the system, possibly also to seed a power base for election to City Council. Sewell was a middle class lawyer and to that extent he had nothing in common with the residents south of St. James Town. However he firmly believed that working class people in Ward 7 are constantly being "screwed" by the politicians, the appointed officials and especially the developer. He claimed that political



power rests with the middle class in our society under the capitalist system. Sewell saw the residents in Ward 7 victimized by the power of politicians who protect and endorse developers. The people in South of St. James Town had a defeatist resignation to the authority of City Hall and Meridian. Sewell believed that the only way in which they could be educated to fight was through professional middle class leadership. Therefore he and John Whitelaw, another community organizer, talked to the residents and began to mobilize the opposition to Meridian.

It is extremely difficult to ascertain whether the initial stages of opposition were initiated by the individual residents who asked Sewell and Whitelaw to help them or whether the opposition was initiated by Sewell who used the issue of Meridian's development proposal as a means of gaining a base of electoral support to win an election and fight a personal battle against Meridian. The fact that Meridian had been able to assemble roughly two-thirds of the properties in the area would suggest that the property owners did not oppose the proposed development or if they did, they were willing to overlook the future of South of St. James Town for immediate financial gain. The South of St. James Town Residents Association representing property owners did oppose Meridian at the Executive Committee meeting. However, the size of membership of this association was never known



and as soon as the Tenants Union was established the Residents Association folded and its members supported the Tenants Union. It is interesting that the Chairman of the Residents Association, Mr. Huculak who was so opposed to Meridian's land assembly and who demanded that residents be allowed to remain in the area, left South of St. James Town early in 1971 to buy a home in another area of the City.

The question to be raised here which I have tried to suggest above is who did participate in opposing Meridian and protesting to City Executive and why? Were they long-term property owners in the area or were they the tenants moved into the houses owned by Meridian from other areas of the City for only a short period of time? If they were transient tenants why did they resist eviction in South of St. James Town and not at their previous residences? Did the families in these houses on Ontario and Bleecker Streets live there before Meridian moved into the area or did they move in as tenants of Meridian knowing the land was being assembled and that the properties would be demolished? It is difficult to know whether this first stage of opposition to Meridian reflected a firm commitment on the part of all the residents to preserve a community for its own sake or whether it was opposition initiated by Sewell and other political activists in the area to create a political issue and stop development by Meridian in South



of St. James Town at any cost. These are not necessarily mutually exclusive bases of motivation. There are obviously many different interpretations of the source of opposition, its motivation and strength depending on the particular biases of either the reader or those who were actively involved. Perception of one's own position in the community and vis-a-vis external forces may vary greatly from one individual to another and this perception determines the course of action taken and its underlying motivation.

In spite of the questions raised, it is safe to say that the initial stages of opposition to Meridian were initiated because there was a visible issue of land assembly and deterioration. The presence of middle-class leadership by the Ward Alderman may have been either a source or a catalyst of organized opposition. However, it is unlikely that deputations to City Executive Committee would have been made or that Meridian would have agreed not to demolish the houses if the residents had acted on their own. For whatever reason, Sewell's leadership was the key to initial opposition to Meridian by the residents in South of St. James Town.

In the year which has passed since the Tenants Union was formed, the tenants in Sewell's twenty houses have worked very hard to make them habitable and nearly everyone got a 30 percent rent reduction when the Tenants Union set the rent. Extensive repairs have been made to furnaces,





plumbing and the structure of these houses. About a dozen companies donated paint and wallpaper. Local 46 of the Plumbers and Steamfitters Union gave the tenants \$3,000 to pay the wages of the Union plumbers working on the project with the remainder to be used as a donation. The Building Contractors Association supplied all the materials required by the plumbers. There seemed to be a great deal of support for the tenants by the general community and they were given extensive press coverage both during confrontation with Meridian and their picketing and meetings and then as the Tenants Union progressed in making repairs.

The effectiveness of the Tenants Union in rehabilitating the homes and continuing to fight Meridian hinged on the willingness of the tenants to co-operate with each other and resolve individual differences in the interests of all members. In effect, its structure as a co-operative meant that a sense of power and organization began to develop from within the Tenants Union rather than from a reliance on John Sewell. This was proof that the tenants could assume the responsibility of organizing themselves provided that they had strong leadership at the outset. For example Roberta Sankey one of the tenants in the Tenants Union who had spent most of her life being moved from one house to another by Meridian's middlemen in the St. James Town area volunteered early in 1970 to work in



organizing opposition to Meridian with Sewell and John Whitelaw. When the Tenants Union was established she became a paid community worker and has provided much of the leadership in South of St. James Town in the past year. This development of indigenous leadership has been crucial to the gradual strengthening of the power of the South of St. James Town Tenants Union.

From this point of view of Meridian, their "experiment" with John Sewell has become a threat. The houses have been repaired. The tenants have initiated and maintained a strong sense of community by working together. They argue that streets of dilapidated houses have become a neighbourhood community where the people know each other and where they are determined to stay. Most of the tenants would agree that redevelopment of the area is necessary eventually. But they do not want it developed as high rise complexes like St. James Town at rents they cannot afford. They have banded together in determination that redevelopment must be in low rise, family housing units at rents which the present residents can afford. They want to stay in South of St. James Town and they want to participate in drawing up the development proposal for their area.

In November of 1970, Sewell, speaking with reference to the Tenants Union's continuing determination to fight Meridian stated that "we've got the houses. If they want to do anything, they're going to have to kick us out (and that) is



going to cause a lot of flak. They'll get all sorts of publicity and we can say that they're bastards and things like that and they don't want that kind of thing; so they'll say, okay, let's negotiate."<sup>5</sup> The alderman was dead right about being "kicked out" but the second half of his prophecy regarding negotiations has not materialized as he anticipated. Meridian realized that opposition from the tenants was increasing every day and that they were determined to stop the development proposed. Repairs were made to each house far in excess of \$500 per house set as a maximum by Meridian. They believed that Sewell had no intention of abiding by the agreement made in August 1970, since the tenants and Sewell had stated publicly that they would never move out of the houses and would tie Meridian up in court for as long as 18 months. It was decided that although Meridian was not yet prepared to begin development, the tenants would be evicted and the houses demolished.

On June 16, 1971 Meridian filed a preliminary rezoning application with the City Clerks Department which could not be processed because it lacked sufficient information. To date, no action has been taken on this application by the relevant city departments because further information has not been received. On June 21 Meridian delivered to Sewell a notice to vacate the twenty houses by August 31, or pay \$100 per day per house which is not vacant on that date. On receipt of the notice to vacate, Sewell delivered

5. GLOBE AND MAIL, November 25, 1970.



eviction notices to his 150 tenants, saying that he had no choice but to ask the tenants to move.

On June 28, 1971, I attended a meeting of the Tenants Union at St. Peter's Church on Bleecker Street to decide what course of action would be taken regarding the eviction. Sewell was not present at the meeting organized by Roberta Sankey and John Whitelaw which was attended by about fifty people. Although the tenants were militant in their anger and opposition to Meridian taking the houses 18 months before they were needed, they were unsure as to what course of action should be taken. It had been decided earlier that on June 29th, the tenants would picket and protest outside the London Life Insurance offices in the same manner as a year earlier, since London Life finances Meridian. The tenants saw picketing as the quickest way to draw attention to their cause through press coverage. At the meeting it was decided that picketing would resume outside City Hall after leaving London Life, joining the Island Residents who were fighting a battle with Metro Council. Secondly, it was decided that a deputation would be made to City Executive Committee by the Tenants asking the Executive Committee to intercede with Meridian on their behalf. A brief stating the case of the Tenants Union was drawn up by Roberta Sankey and John Whitelaw with the help of June Rowlands of the Association of Women Electors who had come from her home in Rosedale to help the tenants at this meeting, and a case worker with the Social Planning





Council. This brief was then circulated as a petition to all tenants to obtain signatures and then sent to the City Clerk requesting a deputation to the next Executive Committee meeting. Thirdly, it was decided that requests would be made by the Tenants Union to all other citizen groups in the City as well as community service organizations for submissions of briefs in support of the Tenants Union to the City Executive.

There were three significant features arising out of this meeting. First, the reason for the absence of John Sewell was not clear. Was it attributed to the fact that the Tenants Union had become sufficiently organized and self-sufficient to work without him? Alternatively, perhaps the fact that he had delivered the eviction notices as part of his agreement with Meridian put him in a position where he could no longer help them or act for the Tenants Union with Meridian or City Council because he had a conflict of interest. Secondly, it appeared that the group would have had considerable difficulty in drawing up the brief if they did not have the help of June Rowlands and the member of the Social Planning Council. This suggested that although the Tenants Union had managed well on their own during the year, in the presence of a direct threat such as eviction they still require outside professional assistance in articulating their demands and directing them to the appropriate City committees. Thirdly, the request for support to other



citizens groups in the City and community organizations would suggest that the Tenants Union still did not see themselves as sufficiently powerful to fight alone.

In the interim between the Tenants Union meeting and the City Executive meeting the tenants picketed London Life and gained the publicity they wanted. According to one of the picketers, "Basically, we just want to get at Meridian by hitting them where they hurt. Their money, that's the only thing Meridian understand. They have no concern for people or their feelings."<sup>6</sup> London Life would not talk to the tenants because they claimed that Meridian had not requested further financing for construction. The Tenants Union also picketed in front of several homes in North Toronto, owned by Meridian executives because Meridian was unwilling to negotiate an extension of the lease. One might argue that the use of these confrontation tactics to embarrass Meridian and create a bad public image for them would hinder rather than advance the cause of the Tenants Union. However, they seemed to feel that they were in such a desperate position that any tactics to draw attention to their cause would be advantageous, short of physical violence. The feeling was that they had everything to gain and nothing to lose. Also, the Tenants Union hired Jeffrey Sack, the same lawyer who defended the Marlborough Avenue Residents to represent them at City Executive and in

6. GLOBE AND MAIL, June 30, 1971



negotiations with Meridian if they were to occur.

On Wednesday, July 14th a meeting was held by the Confederation of Residents and Ratepayers (CORRA), a city-wide coalition of 32 residents groups, at the request of the South of St. James Town Tenants Union to hear their case and to decide what course of action to take. CORRA has become an extremely vocal organization in the City over the past three years as the defender of citizen group interests against City Hall, with a better City and a better government their stated aims. They have been involved in defending individual citizen group interests on particular issues and also in investigating issues such as the Spadina Expressway and Metro Centre which have an impact on the City as a whole. CORRA members see themselves as the "watchdog" of City Hall, trying to activate city-wide citizen participation in the political process. In an interview with Colin Vaughan, Chairman of CORRA, he stated "the most important thing is for people to become involved in an issue, because once they become involved, they learn the process by which the issue is dealt with and once they learn how bad the process is, then we may get some change. More and more people are becoming threatened by more things and as they are threatened, they become exposed to the inadequacies of municipal administration and officials. It is up to citizens groups in the City to make sure we have a decent government next time." The rationale of CORRA in supporting the South of St. James Town.



Tenants Union is a concern for the future of the City. What kind of a City do you want? A city of people or of buildings? According to Colin Vaughan, the change that has taken place in citizen group activity is that "now the experiences of Rosedale and Trefann Court are being put together and the resources of the City are being viewed as a whole. We are starting to see that we have problems in common. In CORRA we help other groups to organize when asked but we don't do it for them. Once we have launched organization in conjunction with the group, we disappear because they have the momentum."

The CORRA meeting was significant in that the South of St. James Town tenants were supported by about 15 residents groups not only because of the issue of eviction by Meridian but also because the plight of the tenants was a common experience in many residential areas throughout the City. The questions being raised at this meeting were much more basic than the issue of eviction. There was a strong concern among all present for the future of residential areas being invaded by the developer. In the words of Derek Hayes of CORRA, Chairman of the meeting, "your fight is one that's being fought throughout the City. Meridian has given development a bad name. Decisions will be made at the time of the next election by the citizens of Toronto that the politicians have to be changed to think of people first and developers second." Those present at the meeting attributed





the free reign of Meridian other developers in Toronto to the encouragement and protection which they are given by politicians at every level of government. It was crucial to recognize the politics of the situation. The Vice-President of CORRA stated that:

Meridian has behaved as a very bad corporate citizen. But I think that regarding politics, we should remember that millions of dollars of the taxpayers money have been poured into Meridian in order to help them carry out what they are doing. The Federal Government has poured money into Meridian in the form of direct loans or underwriting. How many deals has the Province of Ontario made with Meridian? As a reward for what-block-busting?

City Hall is at the tail end of it. The average politician sees the agreements made with the developer by senior levels of government and then it finally comes to his desk as a last step. If private capital is underwritten by government or public money is directly loaned to the developer, he has a social public responsibility.

Many other people among the 150 present at the meeting voiced similar views which unfortunately are too lengthy to be reproduced here. Although all the City politicians were invited to the meeting, the only two present were Executive Alderman David Rotenberg and Tony O'Donohue. O'Donohue saw this meeting as important to learn something of what people think. He stated that "many of us in the Political arena become so emeshed in the system that we lose the minds of the people. I'm here with an open mind and I realize that the South of St. James Town tenants have many more problems than I thought." Alderman Rotenberg listened to the complaints of the tenants but



under an attack from many in the room asking how City Council could justify the eviction of the tenants and monopoly in the City by the developer, he stated that he could not speak for council and that the tenants should get the facts straight and understand the limitations of Council in dealing with Meridian since there is no legislation at any level of government to prohibit Meridian's actions.

Also present at the meeting was Ray Spaxman, Assistant Chief Planner of the City of Toronto Planning Board. He tried to clarify the position of the Planning Staff in the issue of South of St. James Town:

The Planning Board is an advisory body of lay people and politicians set up to advise City Council as to the planning of certain areas. We as the "staff" have to develop the policies of the City as expressed in the official plan. We have a responsibility to develop a plan for South St. James Town but we tend to talk about statistics because the way we have to do it is blue-suited and quiet, trying at the same time to reflect the problems of the community...It's complicated, we are aware that a lot of tenants will be moved. We are aware that present procedures for giving people relocation are poor. We will be advising the Planning Board that the problems in terms of relocation will have to be looked at. In terms of high rise we are concerned about high density which may be alright for young swingers but not for other sorts of people. As high rise moves across the City it is difficult to envisage a balanced type of community. We're not the decision makers. We're the advisors and I'm here to try and report the results of this meeting to the Planning Board who didn't get an invitation... I agree with the theme of the meeting but there are a number of things that will confuse your case if you get



the facts wrong. Primarily, contrary to your claims that residents views haven't been solicited or listened to in drawing up our report, the Planning Staff has tried to get from you on several occasions over two years, meetings to find out what should be done from your point of view... We believe that the residents and businessmens objectives have been expressed along with Meridians.

The readers may feel that the presentation of the events of the CORRA meeting is more detailed than necessary to make a point. However, the speakers quoted here were used to illustrate the complexity of dealing with a private developer either through government channels or the agency of citizen groups. Each level of government and each department input at every level has limitations on its power, legislative or otherwise which cannot be overcome under the present system. How can City Council demand that Meridian not evict tenants for demolition of houses before rezoning approval when there is no legislative support for this course of action at either of the senior levels of government. This interaction of the South of St. James Town Tenants Union, CORRA, aldermen and the Planning Staff focused on the complexity of the issue and the need for each interest to try to understand the problems faced by all others involved. Because this meeting was loud and angry, very few constructive suggestions were made by the tenants as to how they proposed to deal with Meridian on the specific issue of eviction. At the close of the meeting, Derek Hayes of CORRA assured the tenants the support of all the individual organizations which had been



heard and of CORRA as coalition. However, he stressed to the tenants that "you must make some constructive suggestions of where you're going from here. You've stated that you are going to stay in your houses. Now with our support you must organize and present a brief to City Executive." The stage had been set that evening for the appearance before City Executive and city-wide support for the plight of these tenants increased every day.

On July 20, 1971 a memorandum was submitted to the City of Toronto Planning Board by the chief planner regarding the proceedings of the CORRA meeting suggesting the course of action that should be taken by the Planning Board. The recommendation of the Planning Staff is quoted below:

It is understood that there are certain legal agreements between the development company (Meridian) and the Tenants representatives that are beyond the scope and involvement of the Planning Board and must be determined by the parties concerned. However, in view of the fact that no application for redevelopment has been received to date, and bearing in mind that the Planning Board report on the future of the area is not scheduled for consideration until early fall, the Board may consider that such early demolition of homes with the eviction of tenants is a matter of concern, that should be reported to City Council in order that Council may exert its influence on the Development Company to curtail demolition, until such time as the necessary permission for any rezoning and redevelopment is secured.

(REFERENCE 1.4.1.4.1. CA 22/69.)

On receipt of this memorandum, Planning Board members who seemed extremely confused as to the issue at stake or its details supported the ruling of the chairman that because





the issue did not involve an application for rezoning, at that time, it was not a matter of Planning Board business. Although the issue involved serious planning questions, no action recommending to Council protection for the tenants would be taken. It is the opinion of this author that the Planning Board should have at least expressed concern as requested by its staff. How can the Planning Board be seen as an agency of "good planning" in the interests of citizens, if they are so concerned with the formalities of their terms of reference regarding rezoning applications as a prerequisite for taking a position, that they are not even willing to express concern for the people for whom or ideally with whom they are planning?

On July 21, the South of St. James Town Tenants Union appeared before the City Executive Committee. There were approximately 160 people present. However, it was difficult to determine what portion of them were members of the South of St. James Town Tenants Union. Roughly 20 deputations were made to City Executive by members of other citizen groups throughout the City, federal and provincial politicians and social service organizations.

Jeffrey Sack, legal counsel for the Tenants Union, reiterated at this meeting the plight of the tenants to be evicted stating that roughly 150 people in the 20 houses of the Tenants Union as well as tenants in the other houses on the west side of Bleecker and east side of Ontario Streets



could not be relocated in low-income housing because of the large size of the families. He stated the feeling of the Tenants Union that the only reason these houses were required by Meridian was to eliminate any public opposition to rezoning when the matter arose at committees of Council. Given that the application by Meridian for rezoning had not been processed, the Planning Board guide plan for redevelopment of the area had not been completed or made public and Meridian had stated that construction would not commence for at least 16 months, Sack made the following recommendations to City Executive: that City Executive request Meridian to rescind notices to vacate immediately, and secondly that City Executive meet with Meridian to negotiate with the tenants, a new lease for an adequate term through the Tenants Union to terminate the responsibility of John Sewell. Also, the Tenants Union requested City Executive to advise Meridian that it will not favourably consider a rezoning application until the leases are signed and that the City will involve the tenants as well as any other planning agencies and Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation in the planning of this area. These recommendations by Jeffrey Sack were reinforced in the twenty deputations which followed.

The Tenants Union had succeeded in obtaining independent visible support for its case throughout the City. Although many of the deputations were redundant in the five-hour presentation, they were useful to the extent that the



breadth of support for the Tenants Association either in terms of the number present at the meeting or the number of associations supporting the cause could not be ignored by the Executive Committee in making a decision.

The meeting was important in that fundamental questions were raised regarding the rights of low income people to adequate housing in the central city, federal subsidy of low income housing, legislation required to protect the citizens of Toronto against the free reign of the developer, the merits of high rise high density living as a response to the City's housing shortage, and the role of the municipal politicians vis-a-vis the developer and the public. In effect, the City Executive Committee were asked by the many citizen groups and social service agencies to take action against Meridian which would set a precedent for future development throughout the City. Are politicians responsible to the private developer or to the citizens who elected them to office? City Executive were placed in a rather difficult position.

It was the opinion of Meridian represented by their legal counsel James McCallum that the City should not interfere in a contractual agreement between Meridian as landlord and John Sewell as the tenant. Meridian did not feel accountable to the City for Sewell's problem in failing to find suitable relocation for the tenant. McCallum argued that the tenants repeatedly stated that they would not move long before



receiving notices to vacate and that they intended to defeat the agreement which Sewell intended to break. Meridian refused to continue the agreement if Sewell and the tenants would not honour their obligations. Meridian refused to deal with Sewell, and McCallum indicated that it was very unlikely that Meridian would agree to the tenants request that they take over the leases because the tenants "have no assets and can't be hurt financially".

Caught between the obligations as perceived by the tenants and their supporters to intercede on their behalf and the reluctance to interfere in a contractual agreement, City Executive recommended on the motion of David Rotenberg at the conclusion of the lengthy debate that Meridian and Jeffrey Sack negotiate to see if an agreement could be reached. Rotenberg said that the tenants should guarantee Meridian that once a Building Permit for the area is obtained, the tenants would move out without tying the company up in the courts.

Following the City Executive meeting on July 21st, attempts were made by Jeffrey Sack, solicitor for the South of St. James Town Tenants Union, to enter into negotiations with Meridian. But initially these attempts were to no avail. Meridian maintained their position on the termination of the contractual agreement with John Sewell and were unwilling to negotiate any extension of the lease with the Tenants Union directly. On August 16, 1971 Jeffrey Sack on behalf of





the Tenants Union again approached City Executive requesting assistance in initiating negotiations. Unfortunately, since that date, all negotiations between Meridian's solicitor James McCallum and Jeffrey Sack have been private. It was anticipated by this author that negotiations would be completed prior to the eviction date of August 31, but this has not been the case. Rather the eviction date has passed. The tenants have refused to move from the houses and to date no action has been taken by Meridian in enforcing the penalty clause against John Sewell or in beginning demolition of the houses. Because a decision has not been reached, it is obviously extremely difficult to formulate any conclusive statements regarding the success or failure of the Tenants Union in winning a battle against Meridian. However, given these limitations some speculative and general conclusions are possible.

It is significant that the date of eviction has passed and negotiations have not yet concluded. This indicates that Meridian would appear to be willing to either extend the lease or enter some kind of a continuing arrangement with the Tenants Union. If this were not true, it would seem likely that negotiations would have been terminated prior to the eviction date. A court order for eviction would have been filed and the penalty of \$100 per day to Sewell would have been enforced. If these speculations are borne out in the days to come, they will represent a victory of the Tenants Union against Meridian.



The negotiations between Meridian and the Tenants Union represent a substantial change in the relationship between the tenant, the private developer and city politicians in recent years. No longer is the tenant willing to passively undergo continual eviction and relocation as a victim of the developer. The Tenants Union has proven that through organization, mobilization of city-wide citizen group support and use of the Executive Committee, negotiations which three years ago would have been unheard of are now a reality which will see a precedent for every development of the future. In essence, the developer can no longer assemble land, allow it to deteriorate, demolish it and file for rezoning without any hitches. **Active Opposition** from the very people who developers have used for years to fill their houses for a temporary period is a new phenomenon which will be common practice in the next few years as the low income tenant's perception of his rights, to housing and to participation in the political process become more firmly entrenched.

If the tenants of the South of St. James Town Tenants Union are allowed an extension of their lease by Meridian, it is safe to speculate that their sense of community will become more firmly entrenched. On the basis of the possible lease extension their victory will give them an added sense of power and determination to continue opposition to Meridian's development proposal. They will oppose the rezoning application of Meridian during every



stage of the process in committees of Council and eventually at the Ontario Municipal Board. The Tenants Union will refuse to vacate the houses until a Building Permit is granted to Meridian. The members of the Tenants Union are not opposed to development. But they want to participate in the planning of that development because it is their area. To date, they have proven that the image of the low income tenant as part of the "developers army" is gone. Through their active participation in the political process over the past year they have won city-wide support for a cause which five years ago would have been seen as impossible. The responsibility shown by the tenants in the development and maintenance of their neighbourhood cannot be ignored by the Planning Board and the relevant Committees of Council. The Tenants Union have done their part. Now the onus is on the Planning Board as the agency of "good planning" for the planning area and in the interests of the city as a whole and on city politicians to force Meridian to evolve a development proposal which will not replace but rather will incorporate the community of tenants which has arisen on Ontario and Bleecker Streets.





THE DEVELOPER SAYS...







THE DEVELOPER SAYS ...

Meridian Building Group Ltd. is probably the most controversial development corporation in Toronto due to their vast land assembly throughout the city and especially the situation in South of St. James Town which has been unfolded here. Many people wonder what rationale the developer uses in land assembly and how he sees his role vis-à-vis politicians and citizens in shaping the urban environment. At this stage, following the account of South of St. James Town it seems wise to present the views of the Vice-president of Meridian obtained in an interview during the period of negotiations between Meridian and the Tenants Union. This interview will be presented in its entirety because of the implications which arise regarding the relationship between the private developer and the individual citizen.

Q: Mr. Manthorpe, how do you define citizen participation?

A: The subject has arisen in a crude sense in that there has been very little philosophic thought. Citizen participation is an unfinished idea and there hasn't been any penetrating analysis especially in Toronto of what it might mean or what it could do in relation to the health of the city as a whole. It is an expression of certain feelings amongst certain people but it hasn't been expressed in an overall sound theoretical framework. Participation in political decisions is the essence of democracy in that, through voting, people participate in political decisions. The greatest difference between citizen participation and democracy is that democratic government gives the opportunity to put in power the man who will best represent your interests and then practical government must work to benefit all people. As expressed, citizen participation suggests that after an election, you want to sit beside the representatives you have elected and tell them



what you want them to do about matters of interest to you. What can happen is that narrow sectional interests could override the good of the whole and decisions about a particular matter are influenced by the loudest voices heard in a particular district on a local issue. The overall decision is literally thrown out the window. I don't know what citizen participation is or how it should work. At the moment it is extremely ill-defined and I doubt if anyone has really worked out techniques as to how it should be done in a rational manner contributing to the health of the city as a whole. This is the problem.

Q: Do you think it is possible for any citizens group to be representative of the interests of the community?

A: Yes that is simple. But how do you relate it to the present system of government and how do you make it work effectively in the interests of people as a whole? The democratic system has rough edges but it has been in use for a long time. How do you change, adapt and introduce participation in a way that is meaningful and effective. I don't have the answers.

Q: What is the status of your plans for South of St. James Town at the present time?

A: We really haven't got a completely comprehensive idea of what's going on in South of St. James Town. All we have is the official plan and the preliminary report by the Planning Staff regarding their ideas on what should happen. I'm not sure how they see that it should happen but perhaps they will be clearer when our re-zoning application is considered.

Q: Has there been any thought given to the demands of the people in the area?

A: How do you re-accommodate those presently in the area? We have the residents in mind. We are able to carry out development through financial channels allowing certain types of accommodation. The area will change because it has constantly undergone change. The total picture of how long people have been there indicates that the rate of change is fantastic. We buy houses and rent to people who have come in from other areas because our rents subsidized the tenants.

Q: Is it possible to involve people in planning for their area?



A: Undoubtedly, they will be and are involved. People elect two aldermen who represent their views of what should happen in the area through the democratic process.

Q: People want active involvement because of what they see as their vested interest in the community.

A: They do have an interest. But if I am a tenant do I have the right to decide what should happen in the community? What does a vested interest mean? I don't know. If we rent to tenants at uneconomical rates to us, would the tenant for a limited period, be allowed to determine the future of the area? The traditional principle of democracy has been one man, one vote and it has worked through the elected representatives. Now we raise the question of what more than one vote does a person have a right to? Does a homeowner have a greater say in the future of the house than a tenant? Does the fact that tenancy has become a way of life for more and more people make a difference? I don't know. To me, it is a fundamental question. If you assume that they don't have equal rights, the one-man-one-vote principle of democracy disappears. How do you translate unequal voting power into practise? Does length of residence guarantee more voice? One of the great characteristics of South of St. James Town is the transient population.

When you talk about determination of the future what does it mean? For example, there is subsidized OHC housing in St. James Town. We could have considered citizen participation by asking the private St. James Town tenants their opinion of what should happen. We both know what the answer would have been. But the City has taken decisions in favour of public housing and we went along with it at our expense in St. James Town. If you talk about citizen participation, how can we now consider the tenants of South of St. James Town when we didn't consider the St. James Town tenants at that time?

The word "want" is used by everyone. But how do you reconcile wanting to live downtown with the type of accommodation people want, given the growth in our population? It's a matter of mechanics. What type of people should be downtown? Who is entitled to central city housing? It's a hell of a good question!

Q: How do you envision citizen participation in development?

A: They are involved already. They elect a city government over a considerable period of years. The Official Plan has included public hearings and included certain areas for preservation and redevelopment. The Official Plan has been approved as an official document at every level of government. If that isn't enough?





The Official Plan lets us know where our particular kind of operation is possible in an area designated for redevelopment. We go to the area to assemble property and then we apply for a zoning change. The Planning Board holds meetings and reflects the views of the people before it writes a report on that area. The re-zoning application goes to the Building and Development Committee which formulates a draft by-law. Objections are received by B & D. Then the matter goes to City Council and finally to the Ontario Municipal Board where objections are again received. This is a go series of consultations with the public in my opinion. These available channels of participation are extremely good. We know that improvements are needed. But you can attack the present system and destroy it , ending up in a worse situation than where you began.

Q: What are the problems which you encounter in dealing with city politicians and the administration?

A: Uncertainty. We don't know what their decisions will be. The Official Plan is our bible. But there is nothing in it which says that the city must approve a development that is entirely in accordance with it. The Official Plan determines where you build. You acquire property and then what happens is entirely out of your control.

Q: When does private interest become sufficiently large that it is no longer private?

A: I don't know. Any use of land is a matter of public interest controlled by planning and zoning legislation recognized by law. People do have a say. But who has a say? Should it be the people's say that makes a decision?

The most striking fact about the interview with Mr. Manthorpe is that throughout our conversation he raised many crucial questions and was willing to admit that he could not answer them. But in spite of the fact that he cannot answer fundamental questions such as how people ought to be involved in planning and the rights of tenants to determine their life style, Meridian continues to assemble land, allow housing to deteriorate and





destroy neighbourhoods. Our traditional planning techniques and philosophy of progress and development have not demanded that the developer have a social conscience or a moral obligation to the neighbourhood in which he assembles land or the people for whom he is planning.

One cannot isolate the developer as villain because in fact the development industry has been nurtured by the society in which it operates. In the past, progress has been measured by the height and the number of new buildings with little thought given to what has been destroyed to make those buildings possible. Politicians have encouraged private development as a symbol of progress because it has increased municipal assessment and because developers have supported many politicians in election campaigns. One favour deserves another. The wheels of progress roll ahead as the developer has been allowed and even encouraged to destroy everything in his path. It is idealistic to expect that the private development industry will voluntarily impose on itself a social conscience when it has not been demanded to do so by the society in which it functions or by the politicians who make the decisions in the developers favour.

But this definition of progress has begun to change in the minds of a few politicians and many of the residents of urban areas. Progress is being equated with preservation of neighbourhoods for the people who live in them and stresses an understanding of the importance of roots in a



neighbourhood, a sense of permanence and a community which cannot be achieved on the twentieth floor of an apartment block which houses 1,000 people. The developer does not want to understand this because it would mean a complete reorientation in thought as to what type of development would best serve people and a reduction in height or density of a new building or improvement of existing housing stock would substantially reduce the profit to be made.

It is interesting that Mr. Manthorpe uses the democratic process as his rationale for Meridian's freedom in determining how and where people will live. It is true that individual members of a development corporation are entitled to only one vote as are all private citizens. But this vote is substantially augmented by the corporation as a whole because of their desire to contribute to election expenses of any candidate running for political office who is willing to accept their offer. Whether specifically stated or merely intimated the acceptance of financial support by a candidate from a developer means that if elected, the alderman is under constant pressure throughout his term of office to repay the debt in terms of political influence in favour of the developer. Private contributions to politicians are obviously not exclusive to developers but the fact that in the past the developer has offered and the politician has accepted substantially increases the amount of influence available to the development corporation as opposed to that available to the individual private citizen.



Mr. Manthorpe is dead right when he states that "the official plan is our bible." In fact the official plan has become an open invitation to any development corporation to develop any of the areas on the plan which have been specifically designated for redevelopment. But the official plan does not explain how this development ought to proceed or what the rationale is for the specific designations which have been made. Further, the official plan does not state that a certain area must be redeveloped but rather it says that if redevelopment occurs this is where it ought to be. Because there is absolutely no legislative control of land assembly by the developer or his right to demolish property once it is acquired, he is free to use all techniques available to ruin a neighbourhood so that redevelopment is possible. Good housing stock is acquired because the development corporation will offer prices to the owners which are too attractive to refuse. The houses are deliberately allowed to deteriorate so badly that demolition is justified and the stage is set with virtually no control for a new development which has in many cases destroyed a good neighbourhood. It wasn't necessary but it was possible and development corporations exist and thrive on exploiting possibilities.

Another dilemma regarding the right of the developer is the question of property ownership. Our society has operated on the principle that ownership of property in



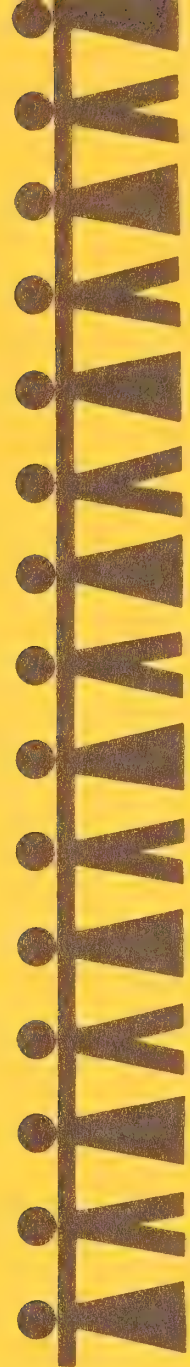
any form entitles the owner to dispose of that property as he wishes subject to zoning legislation. But ownership of property by the individual citizen can not be equated with ownership by a development corporation. Simple logic would state that an individual property owner determines what he will do with his property because only he and his family will be affected by that decision.

But not so for the developer. He is not making decisions for himself but rather for an entire neighbourhood, for hundreds of people who presently live there and for thousands of people who will live there in the future. His power to determine the shape of the city and the way in which thousands of people will live is overwhelming. It cannot possibly be thought of as private property and private interest equal to that of an individual citizen. Although the development corporation is privately owned it is a public concern simply because so many lives and the future of our city are affected by its decisions. A public concern must have a social conscience and moral obligation which are far more important than the zoning legislation imposed on the individual property owner.

It is these questions and fundamental moral and social problems for which Mr. Manthorpe has no answers which politicians appointed officials and the population at large must resolve now and in the future.







TO CONCLUDE





### IN CONCLUSION

Since the three case studies were chosen to highlight three different types of citizen group activity in the urban development process in the City of Toronto, it is important that they be recognized not only as isolated incidents but also as different aspects or phases of changing trends in urban living and perceptions of the political process. The conclusions to be made and questions raised are of necessity general and broad, to be seen as food for thought by citizens groups, politicians and appointed officials.

The first general conclusion which arises from preceding chapters is that an "issue" is crucial to the initiation of citizen participation in development. Usually the issue is perceived by the residents of the designated area whether for private or public development as a direct visible threat to property and immediate surroundings. This is seen to be true in each of the cases studied here although issues were different in each situation. The issue was created by an external force acting on a geographic community. In Don Vale, a renewal designation was initiated by City Council as a result of apparent deterioration in housing conditions. In "Sumerhill Square", Marathon Realty Ltd., a private development corporation, decided to undertake a \$30 million apartment project. In South of St. James Town, Meridian Building Group Ltd. began land assembly to expand its St. James Town complex.

When one realizes that an issue is created simply by a change in the status quo imposed by a developer, a civic official or political forces external to the immediate environment in most cases, it is hardly surprising that the response from these communities has developed in the various ways presented. It is interesting that very



often city politicians on council or committees will accuse residents groups of making an issue which focuses on a particular community rather than the city as a whole. In reality, the politician can hardly expect otherwise. Residents groups at the outset are not making an issue but rather are responding in a variety of ways to situations affecting their community which they feel powerless to control. The issue is created for them.

How does the issue created generate citizen group activity?

First, it must be concrete and visible. Whether it be the loss of housing units in urban renewal, land assembly and deterioration or increase traffic flow threatening neighbourhood safety, it must be visible in order that it can be pinpointed as the responsibility of either the developer, city department, or both. When the source of the problem has been recognized the residents groups affected are forced to use the channels available to them through letters, deputations, petitions in order to influence the decision-makers who are responsible for implementing changes in a community. In essence, the issues created by external agents force citizens to learn and become masters of the political process if their demands are to be met.

Secondly, in past years residents groups, where they existed, would concentrate their efforts on fighting issues and influencing decisions which were within their grasp. Perhaps the old adage "Don't bite off more than you can chew" is most apt to describe this feeling. Evidence to support this statement would be the large number of renewal and private development projects which were conducted in the 1950's and early 1960's with no citizen involvement provided for, primarily because citizens felt powerless to change the



decision which had been made had lacked the understanding of the bureaucratic and political "system", necessary to influence decisions. Delays in obtaining rezoning or a building permit by the developer, because of citizen group opposition, were almost unheard of. But this is no longer true. A number of factors, primarily the higher level of education and political awareness among all segments of society, has meant that in the minds of members of citizens groups, particularly in the areas I have examined, no threat to a community as perceived by the residents is too large to be challenged. Citizens groups of every socio-economic background no longer feel overpowered and inhibited by bureaucratic red-tape, the expertise of the many appointed city officials or the "wisdom" of the politicians. One man interviewed this summer told me quite flatly and unassumingly that "I'm smarter than anyone at City Hall with whom I discussed this problem".

It is my opinion that it is the changing attitude of citizens groups to the powers that be that marks the major difference between citizen participation in development now and ten years ago. No issue is impossible to fight if it threatens the stability of a neighbourhood as perceived by its residents. Citizens groups have acquired the sophistication and internal resources necessary for gaining confidence that they can profoundly affect if not change the decisions made by others which affect them. It is somewhat ironic that the people, for whom plans are made, have learned to use the tools of the system against those who plan.

Another conclusion which I have reached although open to argument and debate concerns social class differences as they relate to citizen participation. Earlier in the discussion of Don Vale, I referred to the "public regarding"





and "private regarding" ethos as sources of political motivation characteristic of the middle class and lower class respectively. It is useful to return briefly to James Q. Wilson's description of those who subscribe to each ethos. The "public-regarding" political ethos is

most likely to be found among citizens who rank high in income, education, or both and is based on an enlarged view of the community and a sense of obligation toward it. People who display it are likely to have a propensity for looking at and making policy for the community as a whole .... In addition, they are likely to possess a disproportionate share of organizational skills and resources .... Upper and upper-middle class people are more likely to think in terms of general plans, the neighbourhood or community as a whole, and long term benefits (even when they might involve immediate costs to themselves)

In contrast, Wilson describes lower middle and low income people as:

objects rather than subjects of civic action; they are acted upon by others but rarely do they themselves initiate action .... Because of the private - regarding nature of their attachment to the community, they are likely to collaborate when each person can see a danger to him or to his family in some proposed change; collective action is a way, not of defining and implementing some broad program for the benefit of all, but of giving force to individual objections by adding them together in a collective protest ... Lower and lower middle class people are likely to see matters in terms of specific threats and short term costs. 1.

1. Wilson, James Q. "Planning and Politics: Citizen Participation in Urban Renewal" in Hans Spiegel, Citizen Participation in Urban Development, op.cit, Vol.1 p.50-51.



When this typology is applied to the three cases which I have studied, some interesting patterns arise. In fact, there is a complete reversal of Wilson's theory. In Don Vale, collective action of the residents, through representation on the Working Committee, was used, not only to object to a renewal scheme as previously prepared, but to devise a renewal scheme which would embody long-range community-wide goals reflecting community needs. It is true that there were many differences of opinion between the groups represented on the Working Committee or working outside it but there was a fundamental agreement among all concerned - that a long-range policy must be devised by the people for the people. Eventually, differences were resolved concerning the scheme itself, compromises were made and a renewal scheme prepared. There is no doubt that individual interests were pursued and protected but collective action did have long range goals.

In the case of Summerhill Square, although there definitely exists a city-wide interest and understanding among the well-educated, upper and middle income residents, it can be argued that it was a community understanding and concern which led residents in the three citizens groups to organize in opposition to the development as proposed because of its implications and potential threat to their immediate environment. It is my opinion that they were "private-regarding" in exactly the same manner as lower class people.

Contrary to the assertions of Wilson, it is my opinion that under the potential threat of development, whether private or public, there is no social class difference in the impact which it has on the residents concerned. Wealth and education do not change an essential understanding



of the importance of maintaining and protecting one's immediate property and neighbourhood from an external threat.

There is however a social class difference in the organizational techniques of citizen participation in development. The most obvious difference concerns leadership. In middle or upper income neighbourhoods, leadership in organizing citizen participation or input into a development proposal, comes from within the neighbourhood. It is indigenous primarily because organizational ability, education in techniques of persuasion and argument and an understanding or awareness of the political system have been ingrained in residents to a greater or lesser degree throughout their lifetime. The "natural" leader may not assume this position as a habit but when there is an issue to be fought he is accorded the role because of proven ability or because of social or professional "clout" he may have. This was proven in the case of Summerhill Square. Leadership, in fighting the issues, which confronted the residents in each of the three neighbourhoods arose from within the neighbourhoods. They knew the process and how to use whatever clout they had. Individually and collectively the organizations were self-sufficient, requiring no help from outside professional leaders.

In Don Vale and South of St. James Town this was not true. Although the leadership on the Don Vale Working Committee came from within the neighbourhood, it was agreed by all whom I interviewed that the professional middle class background of the leaders clearly separated them from the majority of residents. In other words they were from within but not of the community. The impact that this professional leadership had on the credibility of the Working Committee was discussed earlier. But this leadership



however objectionable was indispensable in some form latent or active to the organization and preparation of the Renewal Scheme.

The case of leadership in South of St. James Town is the most interesting and reflects a gradual trend in community leadership which has arisen in recent years. The outside professional leadership of John Sewell was crucial to initial organization and the early phases of protest. If it had not been for Sewell's leadership, the houses would have been demolished and the issue would be non-existent. Sewell was a crutch for the people. But gradually leadership began to arise from within the neighbourhood. The "down trodden" welfare tenant attained the confidence of surrounding residents and became the spokesman for them. It is true that outside endorsement was required from other city-wide organizations but requests for support came from within the association under indigenous leadership not the previous leadership of Sewell.

This trend will be seen as promising by some and threatening by others depending on an individual's vested interests. It is my opinion that the politicization of those who were never allowed or able to speak for themselves is promising. It is true that middle class professional leadership was required at the outset, but gradual education and strengthening of self-confidence among low-income or welfare tenants has not only meant that leadership is becoming indigenous, regardless of social class, but that





the leadership from within strengthens the sense of community and power to influence, in lower income neighbourhoods.

Another trend to be mentioned briefly is the relatively new but increasing tendency among citizens groups in low income neighbourhoods, to avail themselves of the legal and political channels of protection and participation, previously only accorded in practice, to the middle class. It is true that the South of St. James Town Tenants picketed, feeling that they had nothing to loose but they also exploited the opportunities of deputations, letter writing and meetings to the fullest. The fact that they retained legal counsel and that their legal counsel was the same man who represented the Marlborough Residents on the issue of Summerhill Square is significant. In sum, although there remain obvious differences in degree of sophistication and organization between citizens groups of different socio-economic levels who attempt to influence decision-makers, the gap is quickly narrowing because of the increasing level of political awareness of lower-income people.

Another changing trend which must be presented for serious consideration by elected and appointed officials and especially the developer is the changing role of the tenant. In a way, that observation is a corollary to the narrowing gap between social classes in participation. Recall the opinions of Norm Browne of the Don Vale Tenants Association, that absence of property ownership or



long-term tenancy, resulted in apathy, a feeling of powerlessness and a lack of community interest among low-income and welfare tenants. Contrast the role of the tenant in shaping the future of Don Vale with the tenant two years later in South of St. James Town. For reasons which are not yet clear outside of the previously discussed increase in level of education and political awareness, absence of property ownership is no longer a deterrent from community interest and organization. The account of South of St. James Town would suggest that the era of the apathetic tenant passively shifted from house to house by the developer has ended. Not only in South of St. James Town but throughout the city new tenants organizations are springing up in every social bracket, trying to make a positive contribution and improvement to the conditions in which they live. The tenant refuses to be viewed as a "second-class citizen" because he does not own property. Through the common problems faced by the tenant and the property owner they are very rapidly beginning to share the same commitment to neighbourhood preservation, stability and participation in decision-making which affects them.

Thus far, I have tried to present the changing trends of citizen participation insofar as they apply to the urban development process. These trends would suggest the necessity of a changing perception by the elected and appointed officials of their political and administrative roles respectively vis-à-vis policy formulation and



implementation of development as it effects the urban neighbourhood. What changes are necessary and why?

The first area which requires some thought and analysis is the "expertise" of the professional appointed city official which has traditionally been respected and unchallenged by the electorate. Technical experts in planning public works and development are indispensable to the formation and analysis of policy alternatives which will be acted upon by elected officials. However, in the past this "expertise" has been used as a justification for many political decisions which clearly contradict neighbourhood interests. In a recent article entitled "The Technocrat's Role in Politics", Professor Stephen Clarkson stated;

It is only recently that some of the myths of the system have been challenged. The notion of expertise, for instance, has long been synonymous with neutrality and objectivity. But there is no such thing as professional neutrality... While the professional does command certain techniques for analyzing and resolving particular problems, his expertise must always be related to particular parameters. When these guidelines are not defined for him, the expert is then forced to make political choices on his own. <sup>2</sup>

The guidelines for the appointed official ought not to be defined only by future goals of politicians committed to the interests of the city as a whole. Technical expertise and decisions must be made to accommodate and incorporate grass roots expertise in individual neighbourhoods. The people may not know how to do what is required. But this does not mean that they don't know what is required from

<sup>2</sup>Globe and Mail, September 4, 1971



the neighbourhood point of view. Their requests may be entirely unfeasible from a technical point of view. But they must be listened to as potential alternatives which can be weighed by the professional in arriving at recommendations.

At the present time, the only professional appointed officials who are required to obtain citizen input on any development proposal are the planning staff by virtue of their responsibility to the Planning Board. Section 12(1)(b) of the Planning Act requires that the Planning Board

"hold public meeting and publish information for the purpose of obtaining the participation and co-operation of the inhabitants of the planning area in determining the solution of problems or matters affecting the development of the planning area."<sup>3</sup>

However, in spite of these requirements there are many complaints from citizens groups. The first complaint is that notice given by the Planning Board to concerned citizens to participate either in a public hearing or in preparing alternatives to policies does not provide for a sufficient time period to research and prepare either a statement or position in any depth. If citizen input is not obtained at these hearings because of insufficient time, often groups are assumed by the Planning Board to be disinterested.

Another complaint about public hearings is that invariably they are presided over by one member of the Planning Board and the members of the Planning Staff

<sup>3</sup> The Planning Act R.S.O. 1970 Chapter 349 Section 12(1)(b)





concerned with the particular issue. The first problem with this procedure is that unless written briefs are submitted by an individual or citizens group there is no assurance that members of the Planning Staff who record proceedings and opinions will present all opinions and truly reflect the tenor of the meeting in their report to the Planning Board. Secondly, it would seem that since the Planning Board not the Planning Staff must make decisions and advise Council on the basis of these meetings, all members should be present to obtain citizen input first hand not as relayed by the Planning Staff who may have an "axe to grind". Simply stated Planning Board meetings must be held by the Planning Board, not only the staff representing the Board.

Since city departments with the exception of the Planning Board do not hold public meetings citizens must have direct immediate access to commissioners and members of their staff responsible for certain projects. Invariably, at the meetings of committees of Council, the commissioners take a back seat to the politicians and an explanation to the public of policy proposal or recommendation from the appointed official responsible is difficult to obtain. Therefore, the official must be willing to meet with concerned citizens on any issue to hear objections or alternatives to proposed recommendations.



In the City of Toronto, the Development Department would seem to be highly accessible to the private citizen. The Commissioner of Development and members of his staff function as a liaison between neighbourhoods and the private developer. When a developer approaches the Commissioner regarding a possible project, the Commissioner informs the developer that certain citizens groups must be consulted and their opinions obtained at the earliest stages. Often he arranges meetings between the parties concerned and is available to the individual citizen or organization to give opinions as to the merits of a development or the alternatives that could be proposed. The Development Department operates on the philosophy that "encouraging development and working with citizens groups are not incompatible." <sup>4</sup> They make a sincere attempt to reconcile their technical expertise with recognized expertise of residents concerning the neighbourhoods in which they live. This philosophy must be emulated by all other appointed officials and city departments.

What are the implications of trends in citizen participation for the role of the elected city official? In the past citizens participated in local government largely through voting in elections and even then turnout was sparse. The previous chapters would indicate that at least insofar as those issues were concerned, the citizen as passive recipient of bureaucratic and political decisions is rapidly becoming history. But the problems of participation are first the different priorities held by

4. Mr. Graham Emslie, Commissioner of Development  
City of Toronto.



individual neighbourhoods and the city as a whole and, second, the different interpretations which local politicians hold of their roles as elected officials.

Should the alderman make decisions for the city as a whole based on his understanding of his particular ward or alternatively should he make decisions for his ward based on the priorities and goals of the city as a whole? This question cannot be resolved until the alderman defines his role as an elected representative. According to Allan Kornberg, differences in attitude can be arranged along a continuum ranging:

from those who feel that they are required neither to consult with nor perform services for their constituents to those who try to combine some consultation and service with a degree of independence from the constituency, to those who seek constantly to consult with and perform services for constituents.<sup>5</sup>

It is a question of whether the alderman sees his election to office as involving responsibility to reflect through constant consultation the interests of his constituents or alternatively whether he represents community interests as he interprets them with little if any consultation and formulates independent decision in spite of consultation.

If citizen participation in development and other areas of local decision making is to be institutionalized and encouraged as a positive contribution to urban democracy, the politician must see his role as delegated spokesman of the interests of his constituents. Contrary to

5.

Kornberg, Allan, Canadian Legislative Behaviours  
(New York, Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1967) p.106



expectations, this role does not assume a consensus of community interests. But if the electorate has confidence in the responsiveness of the ward alderman while respecting his authority to make the final decision all conflicting interests within his ward on any issue will be presented to him. Having received input from his constituents he must seek to resolve conflicting interests where they exist. If he is unable to resolve conflict between those affected by a particular issue then he must weigh the merits of all points of view in arriving at a decision. If he has failed to be the spokesman for certain interests, it is not because of lack of consultation. His attempts to mirror the wishes of his constituents will instill respect and confidence among them. Perhaps communication between the ward aldermen and their constituents could be made more efficient if meetings were held in different sections of the ward at regular intervals to allow the aldermen to obtain feedback on decisions which they have made and input for future decisions. These meetings could be a general supplement to the sporadic but frequent meetings held as particular issues arise. On the extremely controversial issues such as development proposals, a public meeting initiated by the alderman to obtain opinions and neighbourhood attitudes early in the process would be useful to allay fears among constituents that their opinions will not be listened to. If the neighbourhood is clearly opposed to the development and if the aldermen see their role as spokesmen, they will aid their constituents





early in the process to use the available channels of influence. In this way they are able to resolve conflict within the constituency and also between constituents and the developer or appointed city officials.

Given the ideal hypothetical situation that each alderman is spokesman for his constituency what are the implications for the city as a whole? Final decision-making authority continues to rest with city council. But decisions regarding particular neighbourhoods would not be made on independent judgement of each alderman. Rather decisions by council respecting particular neighbourhood issues would be made on the basis of articulation of issues of that neighbourhood by its elected officials. This philosophy of government is perhaps difficult to visualize at present because it is so different from the present system. It requires complete reorientation of our thoughts about how local government ought to function.

Stated simply, the underlying premise is that given a hypothetical issue "X" the majority of those immediately affected by "X" because of geographic proximity hold a certain view. Alderman A and B have been in constant consultation with these people. They are reflecting the views as communicated to them. Because they are the spokesman for the constituents this is their position. Council's decision must reflect and incorporate this position.



On this premise, people who are immediately affected by a particular issue are involved with their alderman at the earliest stages in voicing their interests. The alderman exerts influence on the appointed officials to consult constituents and involve them in at least an advisory capacity in technical planning earlier in the process.

Recommendations of appointed officials are made to Council incorporating neighbourhood input. In the process elected and appointed officials are continuously involved with constituents. Conflicting interests are resolved and alternatives articulated throughout the planning process. Decisions of Council would then reflect an understanding of the "city as a whole" as a composite of eleven wards. Decisions which are made involving and reflecting the wishes of the people of those wards would ultimately have a positive impact on the "city as a whole". In other words, priorities of the city could be the sum total of the priorities of its neighbourhoods. Given the necessary reorientation of perspective and philosophy of both elected and appointed officials and allocation of time and resources to fulfill what I believe is a sound approach to local government, this presently idealistic concept would in time become a reality.



Overshadowing all interaction between elected and appointed officials, citizens and developers at the local level is of course the power constitutionally vested in the provincial government to determine the structure and functions of local government. The degree of autonomy which local government ought to possess legislatively and financially has long been a topic of intense municipal-provincial debate. Within the context of this study the merits of the various arguments presented cannot be discussed. But it is safe to say that within the present constitutional framework there clearly is a role which the provincial government ought to play in working towards a solution of the many dilemmas of citizen participation in the development process.

The province is responsible through legislation for the structure and function of the Planning Board, for the approval of Official Plans and for hearing objections and ruling on rezoning applications at the Ontario Municipal Board. These are but a few of the many areas in which the final decision regarding local government, particularly respecting the development process lies with the provincial government, primarily in the Department of Municipal Affairs which has local government as its statutory responsibility. It is not the purpose of this report to make



specific recommendations as to technical changes in legislation which would resolve problems faced at the local government level. This must be a topic for further research.

Rather it is hoped that the trends of citizen participation in urban development as elucidated in this report will arouse in provincial government, particularly the Department of Municipal Affairs, a willingness and in fact a sense of urgency to become acquainted with the way in which citizens groups in the City of Toronto and throughout the province are interacting daily with their elected and appointed officials. The provincial government must learn to view the problems of development such as the implications and validity of the Official Plan, public hearings, relocation and land assembly, and the rights of property ownership by the developers not solely through the eyes of the politician, the bureaucrat and private enterprise. The provincial government has a moral obligation to understand and investigate the problems of the development process as seen through the eyes of the private citizen of every socio-economic level in every different situation.

This does not imply a policing function exercised by the Province over the municipality because policing would only serve to augment present provincial-municipal antagonism. Rather, the provincial government, through the Department of Municipal Affairs, through further research, could become more cognizant of the nature of citizen participation





by delineating those questions about the development process through more direct communication from various citizens groups. With this greater appreciation of the role of citizen groups, the provincial government would be able to work more effectively with local government and the private citizen in solving the dilemmas set out in this report, thereby bringing government closer to the people.



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Similarly the expressed views of faculty members of Universities, Community Colleges and individuals in Municipal Associations gave a greater appreciation of the scope of this undertaking.

I would like to thank the many representatives of community organizations and development companies, politicians and city officials mentioned in this study who gave generously of their valuable time for interviews and long discussions with me. Unfortunately many other people who provided valuable thoughts and insights could not be included in the report because of limited time and the large quantity of research material accumulated.

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